Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/snowdenssundaysc0006jame

SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

By

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Basal Beliefs of Christianity.
The World a Spiritual System.
Can we Believe in Immortality?
The Coming of the Lord.
Is the World Growing Better?
The Personality of God.
A Wonderful Night.
A Wonderful Morning.
Scenes and Sayings in the Life of Christ.
A Summer Across the Sea
The Psychology of Religion.
The Truth About Mormonism
The Truth About Christian Science.
The Meaning of Education.
The Attractions of the Ministry.
The City of Twelve Gates.
Jesus as Judged by His Enemies.
The Making and Meaning of the New Testament.
Immortality in the Light of Modern Thought.
Sunday School Lessons, Six Annual Vols.

SNOWDEN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS, EVANGELICAL AND UNSECTARIAN, OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS, IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES: COURSE FOR

1927

BY
JAMES H. SNOWDEN

Sixth Annual Volume

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1926

[*All Rights Reserved*]

LIBRARY OF
Bonebrake Theological Seminary
BV
1560
S6
1927
3,476

Copyright, 1926,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Set up and electrotyped.
Published July, 1926.

Printed in the United States of America
By The Cornwall Press

Of all the books in the world the Bible is incomparably the greatest and best. It was slowly produced, as diamonds are distilled and crystallized atom by atom, through a thousand years at the convergent and crowded crossroads of the ancient world where all civilizations and languages and religions met and flowed into it. Not only was Palestine compressed into its pages, but so also were Babylon and Egypt and Greece and Rome. All the world was taxed and rifled of its treasures to compose and enrich it. No other book is so varied and picturesque and colorful, so surcharged and saturated with the distilled essence of human nature, so woven of the very palpitating fibres of the human soul. It is at once the most human and the most divine book in all the vast library of the world's books. And like an old rose jar it will ever retain and emit its precious divine aroma; out of its ancient moss-covered rock will ever gush forth streams of living water. It can never pass out of human interest and become obsolete, any more than can the majesty of mountains and the mystery of the sea, the beauty of the Parthenon, the plays of Shakespeare, or the soul of Lincoln.—From *The Making and Meaning of the New Testament*.

BOOKS THAT TEACHERS SHOULD OWN

THE MODERN READER'S BIBLE

By Richard G. Moulton

The Macmillan Company

One volume, cloth, complete text, 1738 pages, including full introductory essays to each book of the Bible, $3.50

This well-known book is simply the Bible presented in a modern literary form. It is not chopped up into bits of verses but is printed in paragraphs like any other book, and prose appears as prose, and poetry as poetry. The book simply gives the Bible a fair chance and lets it tell its own eloquent story as it cannot do when cut to pieces in the old form. The reading of one of the books of the Bible, as one of the Gospels, straight through in this volume gives one a new sense of its vividness and vitality.

THE ONE VOLUME BIBLE COMMENTARY

By Rev. J. R. Dummelow

The Macmillan Company, $3.00

This book of 1250 pages compresses between its covers a remarkable amount of scholarly information about the Bible, its books and authorship and background, together with brief comments on important and difficult passages and verses. It has been tried out and given satisfaction to all kinds of readers. Sunday school teachers who do not have the time and training to use commentaries of technical scholarship will find this coming to their help in practical ways at most points.

THE MAKING AND MEANING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: ITS BACKGROUND, BOOKS AND BIOGRAPHIES

By James H. Snowden

The Macmillan Company, $1.50

This book tells how the New Testament was made and what it means. It sketches the Hebrew, Greek and Roman background out of which it grew, briefly explains each book in it, outlines the life of Jesus and of Paul, and brings it all home to our business and bosoms with illuminating interpretation and application. It shows us what a surprisingly modern book the New Testament is and makes good for it the claim and distinction that it is the most interesting as it is incomparably the most valuable book in the world.

LIBRARY OF
Bonebrake Theological Seminary

PREFACE

These lesson expositions follow the subjects suggested by the International Lesson Committee for adults and young people and the intermediate and senior grades. The treatment can be adapted by the teacher to all grades down through the junior and primary. The Bible text used in this volume is that adopted by the International Lesson Committee, the American Standard Edition, which as a more accurate translation serves in itself as a textual commentary in many points. The use of this copyright text has been specially granted for this volume by Thomas Nelson and Sons, its authorized publishers.

LIST OF LESSONS FOR 1927

FIRST QUARTER

Studies in the Christian Life

Lesson			Page
I.	Jan.	2. The Christian a Follower of Jesus. Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-17; I John 2:6	1
II.	Jan.	9. The Standard of Christian Living. Luke 6:27-38	9
III.	Jan.	16. The Christian's Use of the Bible. Deut. 6:4-9; II Tim. 3:14-17	16
IV.	Jan.	23. Prayer in the Christian Life. Mark 1:35; 14:32-36; Matt. 6:9-13	23
V.	Jan.	30. The Christian Overcoming Temptation. Luke 4:1-13; I Cor. 10:12-13	31
VI.	Feb.	6. The Practice of Christian Stewardship. Matt. 25:14-30	39
VII.	Feb.	13. Making Our Homes Christian. Eph. 5:25–6:4.	47
VIII.	Feb.	20. Serving in and Through the Church. Matt. 5:13-16; Acts 2:42-47	54
IX.	Feb.	27. Making the Community Christian. Gal. 5:13-25	62
X.	Mar.	6. Sharing the Good News. Acts 8:4-8; II Cor. 5:14-20	70
XI.	Mar.	13. Making the World Christian. Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 16:6-15	78
XII.	Mar.	20. The Christian's Hope. John 14:1-3; II Cor. 5:1-10; I John 3:2-3	86
XIII.	Mar.	27. Review: Studies in the Christian Life	94

SECOND QUARTER

The Life and Letters of Peter

I.	Apr.	3. Peter Becomes a Disciple of Jesus. Mark 1:14-18, 29-31	102
II.	Apr.	10. Peter's Lesson in Trust. Matt. 14:22-33	109
III.	Apr.	17. Peter's Great Confession. Matt. 16:13-24.	117
IV.	Apr.	24. Peter at the Transfiguration. Mark 9:2-10; II Pet. 1:16-18	125
V.	May	1. Peter's Denial and Repentance. Mark 14:53-54, 66-71; Luke 22:61-62	133
VI.	May	8. Peter and the Risen Lord. John 20:1-10; 21:15-17	141
VII.	May	15. Peter at Pentecost. Acts 2:12-14; 32-41	149
VIII.	May	22. Peter Heals the Lame Man. Acts 3:1-10; 4:8-10	157
IX.	May	29. Peter Undaunted by Persecution. Acts 5:27-35, 38-42	165
X.	June	5. Peter Preaching to Gentiles. Acts 10:34-48.	173
XI.	June	12. Peter Delivered from Prison. Acts 12:5-17.	181

Lesson			Page
XII.	June 19.	Peter Teaches Good Citizenship. I Pet. 2: 11-17; 4:1-5	189
XIII.	June 26.	Review: Life and Letters of Peter	197

THIRD QUARTER

Early Kings and Prophets of Israel: From Samuel to Isaiah
(First Half of a Six Months' Course)

I.	July 3.	Saul Chosen King. I Sam. 10:17-25; 11:12-15.	206
II.	July 10.	Samuel's Farewell. I Sam. 12:1-5, 19-25	215
III.	July 17.	Samuel Anoints David. I Sam. 16:4-13	223
IV.	July 24.	David and Goliath. I Sam. 17:31-37, 40-42, 48-51	231
V.	July 31.	David and Jonathan. I Sam. 18:1-4; 19:1-7	240
VI.	Aug. 7.	David Spares Saul. I Sam. 26:7-14, 17, 21	248
VII.	Aug. 14.	David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem. II Sam. 2:3-4; 5:1-3; 6:12-15	256
VIII.	Aug. 21.	God's Promise to David. I Chron. 17:1-12	264
IX.	Aug. 28.	Nathan Leads David to Repentance. II Sam. 12:1-10, 13	272
X.	Sept. 4.	Solomon's Wise Choice. I Kings 3:4-15	280
XI.	Sept. 11.	Solomon Dedicates the Temple. I Kings 8: 1-11, 62-63	288
XII.	Sept. 18.	The Kingdom Divided. I Kings 12:12-20	296
XIII.	Sept. 25.	Review: The Early Kings of Israel	304

FOURTH QUARTER

Early Kings and Prophets of Israel: From Samuel to Isaiah
(Second Half of a Six Months' Course)

I.	Oct. 2.	Elijah on Mount Carmel. I Kings 18:30-39.	313
II.	Oct. 9.	Elijah Hears God's Voice. I Kings 19:9-18	321
III.	Oct. 16.	Elijah in Naboth's Vineyard. I Kings 21: 5-10, 16-20	329
IV.	Oct. 23.	The Call of the Prophet. I Kings 19:19-20; Amos 7:14-15; Isaiah 6:1-8	337
V.	Oct. 30.	Amos Denounces Sin. Amos 2:4-12	345
VI.	Nov. 6.	Amos Pleads for Justice. Amos 5:1-2, 10-15, 21-24	353
VII.	Nov. 13.	Hosea Preaches God's Love. Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9; 14:4-8	360
VIII.	Nov. 20.	Micah Champions the Oppressed. Micah 2: 1-3; 6:1-13	367
IX.	Nov. 27.	Isaiah Teaches True Worship. Isaiah 1:10-20	375
X.	Dec. 4.	Isaiah Teaches Right Living. Isaiah 5:1-12	382
XI.	Dec. 11.	Isaiah Counsels Rulers. Isaiah 37:5-11, 14-20	389
XII.	Dec. 18.	Review: The Early Prophets of Israel	397
XIII.	Dec. 25.	Christmas Lesson. Luke 2:8-20	404

SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST QUARTER

The great need of our day, as of every day, is "to discover the Christian way of living." This is the only way of living that is grounded in right principles of life, especially in relation to God and sin and salvation.

This way is set before us first and supremely in the teaching and life of Jesus, for he was and is himself "the way, and the truth, and the life."

He was the living incarnation of the truth he taught, and ever "he goeth before," himself first doing the things he would have us do, keeping his own commandments and leaving footprints for us to follow.

In the lessons of this Quarter we trace some of these footprints.

In them we find the means of the Christian life in following Jesus, in practicing the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, in the use of the Bible and in prayer.

We have described in widening circles the field of the Christian life, beginning in one's own inner life in temptation, using our goods in Christian service, and Christianizing the home and church and community and world.

The spirit of the Christian life is illustrated in its unselfish sharing of the good news of the gospel and in its great hope of immortal life.

Could we get these principles and precepts and practices thoroughly inwrought into the whole texture and spirit of our day, they would transform and transfigure it into that city which John saw in prophetic vision coming down from God to earth.

We are now building this city, rearing its jeweled walls around our horizon and laying its golden pavements right under our feet.

This is the meaning of all our Christian work and worship, and these lessons show us how to do it.

Let us study them with this practical end in view, first realizing them in our own hearts and lives and then endeavoring to impart them to others and to send them out in broadening lines to the ends of the earth. "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them."

THE IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES COURSE FOR 1927

FIRST QUARTER

STUDIES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Aim: To discover, through a study of the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles, the Christian way of living in our day.

LESSON I—JANUARY 2

The Christian a Follower of Jesus

Lesson: Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-17; I John 2:6

Golden Text: He saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. MARK 2:14.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 2:5-11.

Additional Material for Teachers: Luke 6:46-49; John 1:3-51.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What it Means to Follow Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Receiving Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

Lesson Text: Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-17; I John 2:6

16 And passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishers.
17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.
18 And straightway they left the nets, and followed him.
19 And going on a little further, he saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets.
20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him.

13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.
14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the *son* of Alphæus sitting at the place of toll, and he saith unto him Follow me. And he arose and followed him.
15 And it came to pass, that he was sitting at meat in his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.
16 And the scribes of the Pharisees when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and publicans, said unto his disciples, *How is it* that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?
17 And when Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners?

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *The Call of Four Fishermen.*
2. *Boats and Nets Left Behind.*
3. *A Tax Collector Called.*
4. *Jesus at a Dinner Party.*
5. *Scandalized Pharisees.*

Jesus needs followers to help him and we need him as our leader to help us.

All leaders must have followers, and all followers must have leaders.

The sun in the sky needs the help of motes floating in the air, for the sun diffuses its splendor by reflecting it from myriads of minute particles of floating dust and thus turning them into countless infinitesimal suns.

Even so the Son of God needs the sons of men; the Lord of glory reflects the light of the world from human minds and hearts.

1. The Call of Four Fishermen

Where did Jesus go to find these first followers who were to be his most important human helpers? Not where we would have thought he should have gone; not up to the Temple among the priests and doctors of divinity, nor up to the colleges in Jerusalem; not to the learned and rich and strong; but down to the seashore among illiterate and profane fishermen working with their greasy, ill-smelling boats and nets.

Jesus did not call many mighty or many noble, but he chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.

After all, these rough fishermen, unspoiled by human philosophy and conceit, were receptive of new truth to which the traditionalized minds of the scribes and Pharisees were closed.

We do not need to be learned or rich or in some high place in order to follow Jesus and help him tell his story to the world, but he comes to us just as and where we are and calls us to his service.

As Jesus was "passing along by the sea of Galilee," he saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew, casting their nets into the sea and he called them, saying, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." And a little farther along the shore he called two other brothers, James and John.

These men had been with Jesus before (John 1:35-42) and were believers in him in some degree but had not yet become professed followers and permanent disciples of his: this call marked the hour when they began to share his ministry.

> "Come ye after me," become like Christ and do his work, is the supreme call to the human soul, this is the heavenly vision that would lure and lift us into the great life that is hid with Christ in God.

These brothers were asked to transform their business into Christ's business, the fishers of fish became fishers of men. The same powers of mind and body, knowledge of business, skill in the use of means, concentration and earnestness, courage and daring, that were used in the old service were now thrown into the new.

> Jesus did not condemn their business, but endorsed it and lifted it into a higher sphere.
>
> No man need go outside of his business, if it is a legitimate one, to find a place and means to preach the gospel of Christ. He can turn his plough or his plane into a pulpit, over his counter he can sell shining spiritual goods, and the humblest toil he can turn into a parable of heavenly things.

2. Boats and Nets Left Behind

How was this call received and answered? "And straightway they left the nets and followed him." And James and John also "left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him."

> They did not claim that business must be attended to first and religion afterward; they did not plead for delay and tell Jesus that after the fishing season was over he would hear from them; but straightway they abandoned the boats and followed him.

Faith instantly leaped into fact, conscience became conduct, and love became life. It was the sharp action of this "straightway" that saved these fishermen and at last made them such strong men.

There is too much lost motion between our call and coming, our doing lags too far behind our duty.

There are too many people who mean to follow Christ after they have attended to something else first.

This indecision, hesitation, delay, is a grave weakness of character that ravels all life out into shreds.

Many men are lost because they are always intending to be saved but never are saved.

When we hear the call of Christ, let us straightway follow him and put our feet in his very footprints.

These fishermen left their boats and nets behind. They were not so deeply enmeshed in their nets that they could not free themselves to follow him. They did not try to bring their boats into Christ's business. In entering the new life they cut loose from the old life.

We must not try to take with us out of the world into the Christian life anything that will encumber us.

Too many Christians are still tangled up in their old fishing nets.

Leave boats and nets behind. We cannot serve God and mammon.

Give Christ your unobstructed obedience. In a profound sense we must leave all and follow Him.

3. A Tax Collector Called

We next witness the call of a tax collector into the service of Christ. Jesus found him at his place of business and spoke the fitting word that drew the man after him as his follower.

Matthew, here called Levi, was a busy man, but it is busy men that Christ wants.

There need be no interference between business and religion; on the contrary they should be interfused into one life.

Religion should put its righteousness and faith and hope into business, and business its practicality and push and pluck into religion.

It may have been that in calling Matthew, Jesus had an eye to utilizing his service as a writer. The tax collector was necessarily an accurate observer, accustomed to keeping accounts and ready with the use of the pen. He would be a valuable man to be associated with Jesus as a biographer, and he fulfilled this office in writing his gospel.

Every one can utilize his peculiar powers and opportunities in the service of Christ.

The Master calls each for a special service and we should find our work and do it with our might. We must try to win business men and not hesitate to go into their place of business, as Jesus did, and ask them to follow him.

A quiet word spoken for Christ in the privacy of the office or the roar of the factory has won many a man to him.

The business of collecting the hated Roman taxes was a fearful offense and exasperation to the Jews. The Jew that would accept this office became a traitor and renegade and social outcast that was universally despised and hated by his own people. Matthew was such a Jew, and it was a daring break with and defiance of popular prejudice for Jesus to call him as his disciple.

By this act he early gave notice and demonstration that he would not be bound by public opinion and was no respecter of persons.

The narrowness of Jewish exclusiveness and pride could not shackle him, and he showed his independence and originality. He struck out along bold broad lines that broke down class distinctions and hatreds and made wide room for his kingdom.

"Follow me," was the command of Jesus to Matthew, and this is his bidding to every soul. We must all follow some one, and we find the right Teacher and Guide in the Lord Jesus.

The command was immediately turned into conduct. We have a competent and trustworthy Guide and should follow him with unhesitating obedience.

He that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

4. Jesus at a Dinner Party

In the course of time Matthew made a great feast in his own house (Luke 5:29), and a great company of publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples.

This feast was no ordinary dinner, but a great affair and the "many publicans and sinners" implies a general gathering of this class of people. Possibly scores or even hundreds assembled in the spacious court of the wealthy tax collector's house. It looks as though Jesus used Matthew as a means of introduction to this class of society.

It is significant that Jesus was present at this feast.

He was not an ascetic, standing aloof from the joys of the world in tacit disapproval, but he shared in all human festivities, attended a wedding and sat with men at their feasts. The man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief was also anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows: he was the gladdest man that ever lived.

Yet even at this feast Jesus had a religious end in view and was working out his mission. He was burrowing down into these lower strata of society in order that he might put his lever under them and lift them into the light.

He associated with the lowest classes, not that they might drag him down, but that he might raise them up.

He did not come to slice the loaf of society horizontally and save the upper crust, but to slice it vertically from top to bottom and save every layer and part of it.

Jesus met these hated tax collectors and vile people on natural human grounds as a man among men in pleasant social intercourse and thus gained their confidence and good will.

Everybody else was against them, but they felt that he was for them and this drew them to him; yet he was no more smirched by his pres-

ence among them than is the sunlight by its association with the slime on which it falls and which it cleanses.

We cannot help people as long as we stand apart from them, especially in an attitude of superiority, but we must stand on a level with them and give them our hand, and then we may win their sympathy and lift them up.

5. *Scandalized Pharisees*

This feast was a greater offense to the Pharisees than the call of Matthew and amounted to a public scandal.

All their principles and precedents of social decorum and decency were outraged by such conduct.

They were quick to make their criticism known to the disciples, stinging them with the taunt, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" Their self-righteousness had crystallized into that cold hardness of heart in which they despised others and counted themselves defiled if even the shadow of a "sinner" fell upon them as they passed along the street.

We must beware that this blind and foolish spirit does not lurk in our hearts.

It is pleasing to our pride to count ourselves better than others and think that we must keep aloof from the common crowd.

This spirit is in deadly antagonism with the spirit of Jesus, and a proper sense of our sin and unworthiness will burn it out of us.

This criticism was reported to Jesus, and he made a reply that cut it up by the roots. He laid down the principle that they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The physician would disown his mission and defeat his professed end if he forsook the sick and associated only with the well.

Jesus took the Pharisees on their own ground and rooted his action down in common sense.

They were as inconsistent and absurd in their practice as a physician that would set up a great medical establishment and yet refuse to receive or see a patient.

In so far as we profess religion and maintain an exclusive and unbrotherly attitude towards sinners even the vilest, we are guilty of the same absurdity and bring upon ourselves the same condemnation.

In serving Christ we must not be too particular about the work we do or the people we may be called upon to associate with, but go with him into all his work and "walk even as he walked."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give reasons why Christ needs followers today.
2. What are some practical ways in which we may follow him?
3. Can we follow him literally in all the things he did?
4. How may we mingle with worldly people and yet not be of the world?
5. May we always find some good in the worst people?

LESSON II—JANUARY 9

The Standard of Christian Living

Lesson: Luke 6:27-38

Golden Text: Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. MATTHEW 5:48.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:1-10.

Additional Material for Teachers: Matthew 5:13–7:5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Christ Requires of Us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christianity of Christ.

Lesson Text: Luke 6:27-38.

27 But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.

29 To him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also.

30 Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.

35 But love your enemies, and do *them* good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.

36 Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37 And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Loving Our Enemies.***
2. ***Paradoxical Precepts.***
3. ***The Golden Rule.***

4. Mercy.
5. Judging Others.
6. Good Measure.

The Sermon on the Mount is truly a mountain sermon, overtopping all the moral summits of the world.

It is not a series of "sweet, impossible precepts," as an English poet pronounced it, or "impracticable," as an English archbishop declared it to be, but it is to be interpreted in its true meaning and then obeyed.

It is in some of its precepts expressed in Oriental modes of speech, but its principles and points are plain.

It sets forth the end and outcome of the kingdom of God in holiness of heart and life and may be said to contain the constitution and by-laws of this kingdom.

The world has not yet caught up with its simplest requirements. Saturate society with its spirit and the world would be washed pure and the kingdom of God would be realized. One day filled with it would be a bit of heaven.

1. Loving Our Enemies

The duty of loving our enemies is more easily understood than obeyed.

At this point the new law of the kingdom is set in contrast with the old law of Moses.

The Mosaic law restricted love to one's neighbor (Lev. 19:18), and even went so far as to suggest hatred to one's enemy (Deut. 23:6). Jesus broadened the command out so as to make it include enemies and enjoined his disciples to pray even for active and bitter enemies that persecuted them.

This is a hard grace to exercise, calling for a full and ripe Christian spirit, and there is pressing need for it in these days when the world has been so recently filled with "songs of hate" and is still in a state of unsettled problems and mutual recrimination and strife.

The great example of this principle, as in everything else, is God himself. If he requited his enemies as their rebellion deserves he would slay them by the breath of his justice. But he is long-suffering and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

In some ways he puts no distinction between the good and the evil. His sun rises and flings its splendor in equal prodigality upon the righteous and the wicked, and his rain distills its blessing on the just in no richer or gentler grace than upon the unjust.

This impartial and generous goodness should fill our hearts and mark our behaviour.

If we simply love people of our kin and kind, we are no better than people of the world and pagans, for they are adept in the arts of politeness, and even barbarians love their own kin.

The Christian should have the expansive love of God that takes in all people as his children and yearns to draw them to his heart. Love to enemies is the spirit of good will that seeks to do the best thing for them and to remove old offenses and restore mutual faith and fellowship.

2. Paradoxical Precepts

As instances of love for enemies in extreme situations we are given some paradoxical precepts of which, however, the meaning is plain. "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other."

It would be obviously unreasonable to say that this should always be obeyed literally.

Jesus himself did not turn the other cheek when struck on the face in the High Priest's hall, but rebuked the offender (John 18:22-23).

The spirit of the command is that we should not easily give way to temper and anger and always be on the outlook for a quarrel and ready to strike back, but that we should be patient and bear much and go as far as we can in submitting to indignity in the endeavor to negotiate the trouble and compose the situation into peace.

Love will bear much, but it cannot be trampled upon with impunity, and Jesus himself on one occasion bade his disciples to "buy a sword" (Luke 22:36).

In the same spirit we are to interpret the further commands: "and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also. Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again."

Taken literally such precepts would disorganize society and turn civilization into anarchy and chaos, but interpreted as an exercise of the spirit of love which goes as far as it can in bearing with those that are injuring us, it is a wholesome principle and saving spirit that would deliver us from many a quarrel and turn many an enemy into a friend.

They that take the sword shall perish by the sword, but a soft answer turneth away wrath.

3. The Golden Rule

This spirit of peaceful forbearance is condensed and crystallized into the Golden Rule that fell from the lips of Jesus as one of the most precious jewels of the world's literature: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Something similar to this has been found in other writings, and Confucius stated it in the negative form, "Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself."

But however men may have struggled towards this truth, Jesus gave it its full and generous expression and thereby stamped it with his own spirit and originality.

This lifts the rule out of the narrow and calculating spirit of regarding only our legal relations with others and sets it in the golden atmosphere of Christian liberty and love.

The rule as thus expanded and glorified requires us to consider every one in the light of brotherhood in which we are to extend to him every good that we could rightly wish him to bestow upon us.

If he is in any need that we can supply, growing out of his ignorance or poverty or misfortune or sin or sorrow, we should deal with him as did the Good Samaritan with the wounded Jew, going to his aid, showing him our sympathy and providing for his necessities and welfare as our means permit.

The same rule should be extended to corporations and churches and political opponents and parties and even to nations. Shou'd one nation take advantage of another owing to its superior position or power or exact unjust and oppressive requital or reparations?

This rule, like all rules, calls for interpretation and adaptation to the peculiar conditions of each case.

It cannot be pleaded against the enforcement of justice in our individual and social and international relations.

The spirit of this Golden Rule is just the spirit of universal good will and love, and if this spirit is breathed through our social relations it will temper and soften and brighten and glorify them into mutual brotherhood and peace.

4. Mercy

The spirit of mercy is enjoined upon us.

This is the Golden Rule carried to the extreme limit of its gracious application.

Mercy is forbearance from exacting justice and punishment from those who are in the wrong and are fallen into our power; it restrains us from pressing others to the wall when justice might sustain us in doing so; it forbids us to exercise a hard spirit towards others but calls for brotherly consideration and kindness.

Especially are we to cherish this spirit because we have all been spared and blessed by the mercy of God, and for us to receive of his grace and then turn in unrelenting justice upon others is base hardness of heart and despicable ingratitude.

Justice that knows no temper of mercy may be unjust and cruel as death, and there is no small amount of such justice in our social and business life.

Are not Christians and members of the same church often harsh in their mutual relations and even good haters?

A perfect standard is held up at this point when we are admonished to be merciful "even as your Father is merciful."

Were God to require of us one of a thousand, who could stand before him? And having freely received divine mercy we should exercise the same spirit towards our human kind.

5. *Judging Others*

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." This cannot be taken so literally as to make it exclude all judgment of one another, for such judgment is a social and moral necessity and is one of the safeguards of our life.

It puts a wholesome constraint upon people to be just and careful in their judgments of others, and such social judgment acts as a social scavenger to keep our moral life clean.

But the spirit and purpose of the rule is plain: it warns us against unnecessary and unjust and censorious fault-finding; against a sharp tongue and a bitter spirit; against raising rumors and suspicions and sowing the air with sinister insinuations and suggestions.

It is easy to cast an aspersion or a shadow of doubt upon a person by a mere word or gesture or glance of the eye that will start rumors and grow into reports and become neighborhood gossip and scandal and cause alienations and blight characters and do incalculable harm. Such judgment is malicious and wicked and should receive the strongest condemnation.

One who is given to such fault-finding is sure to have it come back to him, and with what judgment he judges he shall be judged.

A gossiping sharp tongue, a chronic censorious spirit will get what it gives, reap what it sows, and be condemned with the same judgment with which it condemns others.

6. *Good Measure*

The rule of giving and receiving forgiveness leads to the statement of a general social law that applies to all giving.

As we give we shall receive, and the more generously we measure out our benefits to others, the more abundantly shall such blessings come back to us.

One who is gracious in his treatment of others will receive such generous treatment himself; whereas one who is censorious and selfish in his social relations will be paid back in his own coin.

The people who complain of the lack of sociability in a church are pretty sure to be conspicuous themselves in their lack of such grace.

They are cold and distant in their own manner and they get what they give; whereas people that are genial and warm and sunshiny themselves never complain of any lack of sociability in others because they draw it out of them.

The icicle carries its own chill with it, but the sunbeam radiates warmth out of its own bosom.

Even in business generous dealing attracts trade and increases its own prosperity.

Our own yardstick and bushel measure that we use in our dealings with others will be used by others in their dealings with us, and with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again.

These social laws and personal virtues are the Christianity of Christ. They are required of us, not as arbitrary rules, but as reasonable and right, good and blessed in their very nature, in keeping of which there is sure reward, and in trampling upon which there is necessary and just retribution.

Christianity must turn its preaching of these things into practice, or it will discredit all its professions and become an impertinence among men and an offense to God. Happy are we if, knowing these things, we do them.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some means by which we can turn enemies into friends?
2. Why did Jesus ever use paradoxical language?
3. Will the Golden Rule work in business? In international relations?
4. What lies at the root of a sharp or evil tongue?
5. Give further illustrations of how it pays to give good measure in all the relations of life.

LESSON III—JANUARY 16

The Christian's Use of the Bible

Lesson: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; II Timothy 3:14-17

Golden Text: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. PSALM 119:105.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:9-16.

Additional Material for Teachers: Psalm 19:7-14; Luke 24:44-47; John 5:39-40.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Read and Study the Bible.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How to Get Help from the Bible.

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; II Timothy 3:14-17

4 Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is
one Jehovah:
5 And thou shalt love Jehovah thy
God with all thy heart, and with all
thy soul, and with all thy might.
6 And these words, which I command
thee this day, shall be upon thy heart;
7 And thou shalt teach them diligently
unto thy children, and shalt talk
of them when thou sittest in thy
house, and when thou walkest by
the way, and when thou liest down,
and when thou risest up.
8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign
upon thy hand, and they shall be for
frontlets between thine eyes.
9 And thou shalt write them upon the
door-posts of thy house, and upon
thy gates.

14 But abide thou in the things which
thou hast learned and hast been as-
sured of, knowing of whom thou hast
learned them;
15 And that from a babe thou hast
known the sacred writings which are
able to make thee wise unto salvation
through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
16 Every scripture inspired by God *is*
also profitable for teaching, for reproof,
for correction, for instruction which
is in righteousness:
17 That the man of God may be com-
plete, furnished completely unto every
good work.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Source of Divine Truth.***
2. ***The Truth in the Heart.***
3. ***The Truth in Life.***
4. ***Abiding in the Truth.***
5. ***Inspired Scripture.***

The Bible is our richest literary and religious inheritance. It was distilled and crystallized out of a thousand years of the experience of

the most gifted people religiously that ever appeared in the world; a race that was sensitive to the things of the spirit and was quick to catch every breath of God.

The Hebrew was the most richly endowed child of God and yet also the most wilful and wayward and passed through the deepest waters and the fiercest fires.

He poured his burning throbbing soul into this book so that it flames with his ardent dreams and hopes, is jubilant with his joyous triumphs, smeared and stained with his sins and tears, darkened with his tragedies, and sobs with his sorrows.

To know this book is an education.

It broadens the brain, kindles the imagination, purifies the heart and transforms the life. More than any other book it has shaped and colored the history of these nineteen Christian centuries, and with every cycle of the sun it is infiltrating its teaching and spirit more deeply into the highest and finest civilization.

But as yet it is sadly true that only dimly and slightly is its light seen and its power felt and its truth transmuted into life, and its great days are yet to come.

It is rooted in the religious nature of man and will endure as one of the permanent and perennial interests and values of our human world.

Such a book we should appreciate and learn how to use by studying it intelligently and hiding it in our hearts and living it in our lives.

1. The Source of Divine Truth

All things root back in God and he is the fountain whence all the streams of goodness and blessing issue.

Moses, standing on the border of the promised land and delivering his farewell discourse to the people of Israel, planted his teaching on the unity and sovereignty of God. "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

All truth has its seat in the bosom of God and therefore all truth should lead us back to him and put us in right relations with him.

If we are wrong in our thoughts of him we shall be wrong in our thoughts of everything else.

That the Lord our God is one Lord is a fundamental fact in all religion, philosophy, science, art, and life. Nature is a grand picture book revealing the thought of his mind and the work of his hand.

Religion is the clearest revelation of his person and character, power and providence, and this truth burns in its fullest and purest splendor on the pages of the Bible.

Our right relation to God as the source of all truth and goodness is love: "thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Our love for God should be intelligent, based upon some worthy understanding of his nature and presence in the world; fervent, rooted down in the emotions of the soul; and strong, embracing our undivided total personality.

The Bible is the great book of instruction about God. Unworthy and wrong thoughts of him have often debased and darkened the religions of men, but in following the teachings of the Bible we do not walk in darkness but have the light of life. "For with thee is the fountain of life: In thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9).

2. The Truth in the Heart

Moses next proceeds to unfold how these laws shall be kept.

They are first to be in the heart.

The heart is the fountain out of which issue all the streams of life, and if these "words" are to reach every current and atom of life they must first be put into the heart. They are written upon the heart by lodging them in the memory so that they become familiar rules with which to regulate life.

Deeper still they are put into the heart by being wrought into the settled disposition of the soul and into the habits of life through obedience.

The heart beats automatically. We do not have to think about its beating and keep it at work, but it runs and regulates itself. So is it with these laws of life when they become disposition and habit.

Conduct reacts upon belief and drives it deeper into the heart and fixes it in our permanent preferences.

Every act of obedience helps to crystallize the soul into truth and right.

When this process is complete the soul lives the laws of life with unconscious ease and perfection, as the sun shines and as the bird sings.

It is thus that we incorporate truth in our personality in all the fields of life, in music and all art, as well as in religious belief and conduct.

Having got these laws in the heart, the next step is to get them into the home. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

The home is a larger heart and they should both pulse with the same spirit.

These laws of life are no sooner received than they are to be given, and they are first to be given to our children. Parents have a right to impart to their children their principles of creed and conduct and to them is given the immense and far-reaching responsibility of molding the nature of their children when it is still fresh and plastic.

By positive instruction and prayer and especially by the silent steady influence of example they should train their children into harmony with the law of the Lord.

The fundamental duty of religious education is now being pressed upon all our churches and is filling a constantly enlarging place in our religious life and work.

3. The Truth in Life

Having been wrought into the heart and home the law of the Lord is next to be widened out over the whole field of life. It cannot properly be confined within set limits, any more than can the at-

mosphere. but it spreads and works everywhere. "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Here is a religion that covers the whole day, which pervades and regulates every act and attitude of man, which persists in flowing into the whole mold of daily position and continual progress.

The word of God can accommodate itself to every season and circumstance of life. It can be spoken while one is walking along the way; it can adapt itself to one sitting in his house in the very center of the family. When a man lies down religion can speak in terms of restfulness and meditation, and yet it is so active that when he rises up it energizes his whole personality and makes him more efficient in everything he does.

It is truly profitable for all things and has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come.

"And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates."

There shall be no secret religiousness, no stealthy piety.

If the word is in the heart, it must also be in evidence on the hand and upon the forehead.

A man's whole personality and character should advertise his religious faith and spirit and be a living gospel known and read of all men.

Yet this beautiful commandment that was intended to saturate all life with the religious spirit was turned by the Pharisees in their phylacteries into an ostentatious formality and empty hypocrisy.

The letter may thus be constricted into a fetter to strangle the spirit or withered into a dry husk which contains no corn.

Ever must we strive to turn the Bible into the bread of life to feed the soul and guard against making it a mechanical rule to bind the brain or an outer letter to kill the spirit.

4. Abiding in the Truth

We pass in our lesson from Moses to Paul, from the Old Testament to the New, for the Bible is one book and speaks with one voice on the fundamental duties of religion from Genesis to Revelation.

This Second Epistle to Timothy is the last letter we have from the hand of Paul, written in Rome near the day when his life ended under a Roman sword.

Paul was now an old man, broken in health, suffering from damp and cold (4:13), deserted of friends except the faithful Luke, and piteously begs Timothy to bring Mark and come to him.

Yet the letter written in these distressful circumstances breathes an air of unflinching faith and calmness and courage.

The aged apostle exhorts the young evangelist to be true to his early training. His Christian heredity dated back to his grandmother (1:5), and his faith thus had deep ancestral roots.

From his childhood he had known the Scriptures, which had made him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ.

Our heredity has tremendous power in shaping us, and one of the greatest blessings that can be bestowed upon us is to be born in a Christian home.

Early teaching and influence leave their impress upon us, as footprints in the sand harden into rock.

Yet Christian training does not in itself insure our Christian character and conduct: we must abide in them.

No faithfulness on the part of our parents can take the place of faithfulness on our own part. A good mother may have a bad son, because the son does not abide in the instructions of the mother.

The Scriptures must not only be known, but also be kept in the heart and obeyed in the life.

5. Inspired Scripture

The purpose and power of Scripture are set forth in one of the most familiar verses in the Bible. "Every scripture inspired of God is also

profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." Scripture is "God-breathed," as the Greek word means, it came from God's mind and expresses His thought and love and will, though it was transmitted to us through human minds.

Its purpose is practical.

It is not a book of science or philosophy or even of theology, though it contains materials for theology. It was not written as a book of literature, though it is literature of fine quality and rich flavor.

But it is a book that has business with us, and it keeps its eye on that business from start to finish.

It is profitable for teaching the great truths and commandments of religion, for rebuking us for our sins, for correction in setting us upright, and for training us in right character.

Its ultimate end is a perfect man, "complete, furnished completely unto every good work." The Christian is to be complete, not lacking in any essential quality of manhood; and all his powers are to be used for service.

This is the object of the Bible and we read and study it rightly and get the proper help from it only as we use it to this end.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is God the source of scientific truth?
2. What is the value of committing Scripture to memory?
3. What is the value of other sacred writings?
4. What are some of the best methods of studying the Bible?
5. How can we turn the Bible into obedience?

LESSON IV—JANUARY 23

Prayer in the Christian Life

Lesson: Mark 1:35; 14:32-36; Matthew 6:9-13

Golden Text: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. MATTHEW 7:7.

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:31-39.

Additional Material for Teachers: Matthew 7:7-11; 18:19-20; Luke 18:1-14; I John 5:14-15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Learning from Jesus How to Pray.

Topic for Young People and Adults: What Jesus Taught about Prayer.

Lesson Text: Mark 1:35; 14:32-36; Matthew 6:9-13

35 And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed.

32 And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray.

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled.

34 And he saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one.*

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Gethsemane.***
2. ***The Inner Circle.***
3. ***A Great Darkness.***
4. ***A Pathetic Cry.***
5. ***The Model Prayer.***

Jesus can teach us to pray because he prayed himself and knew the inmost secret and blessing of communion with the Father.

It was in the early period of his ministry that "in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed."

He had just closed one day of busy work and was about to enter upon another, and he began the new day by baptizing his spirit in the solitude of the mountain and the mystery of the sea and entering into the secret place of the Most High.

He gathered strength out of God for the work of serving men. All through his ministry he thus kept his soul fresh and strong through fellowship with the Father and this enabled him at last to bear the great agony of Gethsemane and of Calvary.

1. Gethsemane

Out of the upper chamber in Jerusalem Jesus and his disciples came "unto a place which was named Gethsemane." The name means "the oil press," and the place was an orchard of olive trees such as is found there today.

Deeply significant was the name and it touches a chord of sorrow in our hearts. Every life has its Gethsemane.

"Sit ye here, while I pray." Prayer was his preparation for his Passion. He wanted to see full and clear the light of his Father's face before he stepped into the final darkness. He sought to fall into perfect submission to the will of God and feel the sustaining power of his presence: he knew he could then bear the Cross.

Prayer is the highest preparation for every duty and burden. It quiets the soul and clears its vision so that it can see the path of truth and duty.

In entering any Gethsemane let us enter through the door of prayer, and then we can endure the agony and we may be able to come out calm and strong.

2. The Inner Circle

"And he taketh with him Peter and James and John." The three witnesses of the Transfiguration were also witnesses of the agony of Gethsemane.

They saw Jesus on the mountain top steeped in splendor, and they saw him in the garden bowed under sorrow and bloody with agonized sweat: by such scenes were they fitted to be witnesses for him.

It was James and John who, in asking to sit on the throne with Jesus, had said that they were able to drink of the same cup that he would drink. Here they saw what that cup was, and they did drink of it as every disciple must.

Why did Jesus, leaving the other eight disciples behind, take these three with him?

Partly as a guard against interruption, but mainly for the sympathy and support of their presence.

They were the inner circle of disciples that understood him best and that he trusted most.

It was a beautiful and pathetic exhibition of the humanity of Jesus that in his hour of trial he wanted his dearest friends near by.

Their simple presence helped to support and comfort him; their shoulders were under his burden and he was so much the stronger by reason of their added strength.

Sympathy has a wonderful power to lighten burdens.

Solitary suffering is doubly hard to bear. It gives us a sense of unsupported and forsaken loneliness that kills courage and fills us with despair. The presence of a friend rallies our energies and inspires us with new life.

There are many lonely burdened hearts in the great Gethsemane of this world, and, as opportunity offers, we ought to support and comfort them.

It was the simple presence of these chosen disciples that Jesus wanted: not their garrulous talk. There was nothing they could say that would help him: but their watchful waiting near by would help him.

The best sympathy is not that which is most voluble and fussy: the silent presence, the sympathetic tear, the thoughtful helpful act, these go deeper.

There are chambers of sorrow in which voluble speech is an impertinence and only silence is soothing.

3. A Great Darkness

When Jesus and the three disciples were buried deep in the seclusion and shadows of the garden, a mysterious dread as the horror of a great darkness came upon him and he began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled and said unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

What was this terrible storm that broke upon the sinless Christ?

We cannot enter into all the meaning and mystery of this anguish, for it involves roots and relations that stretch infinitely beyond our understanding and experience. It is a burden of sorrow of which our minds can touch only its outer edge and fringe.

This was the agony that forced from the sensitive quivering frame of Jesus great drops of blood. This was the cost of our redemption.

Redemption always costs a great price.

A thousand battlefields have bought the liberties we now inherit. It took a great bath of blood to cleanse our flag of the foul blot of slavery and mend its rent; but today our country stands clean and free and united as it never could have been without that great struggle and heavy cost. The Great War is the greatest price the world has ever paid, and while we cannot yet see its outcome and meaning, the future will reveal it.

Our intellectual progress has cost the sweat of countless brains, and the path of moral and spiritual advancement has been paved with broken hearts. We see the masterpiece of the painter, but we do not see the repeated failures and the sleepless nights of the artist over many a ruined picture before he attained his ideal.

Gethsemane is the preparation for and the price of every worthy achievement. Let us not think to escape this path and pain. The Master trod it: shall not the servant tread it still?

4. A Pathetic Cry

Out of this garden floated one of the most wonderful prayers in the Bible; out of this darkness and agony came strong trust and submission. "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." Abba, the Aramaic word for father, is one of the few literal words of Jesus in his native speech that have come down to us so that in these syllables we hear the very sound of his voice.

"Father" must ever be the first word of our prayer, showering upon us the most charming memories and suggestions.

We cannot pray to an "Unknowable Power" or infinite "What is it?" "All things are possible unto thee" is the strong ground of confidence on which Jesus took his stand.

Prayer has no meaning unless it first puts God on the throne of the Rock of Ages.

If his power and providence were limited, he would be impotent to respond to our appeals. Faith asserts the sovereignty of God and then commits all things into his hands.

Yet the power of God is not unbridled and arbitrary caprice, but is controlled by his truth and goodness and grace. There are some things that God cannot do; he cannot lie; he cannot violate his own holy nature.

These limitations, however, are not imposed upon him from without, but spring from within and are the expression of his own character and will and thereby are his perfect freedom.

God can do all things he wants to do.

"Remove this cup from me:" what a pathetic cry is this; how human it is! The cup of the cross was already becoming so bitter that Jesus instinctively drew back from it in horror and prayed that it might pass.

The humanity of the Son of God is here laid bare down to its shrinking, quivering nerves.

As he looked full at the cross, for a moment his courage wavered and his faith paused.

This was not human sinfulness, but only that human shrinking which is one of the safeguards of our life.

It is right for us to pray that the cup of trouble may pass.

All the saints have cried to God in their Gethsemane, "Deliver me out of all tribulation."

"Howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." This was the strong sure check Jesus put upon his own will, the invulnerable safeguard he threw around himself against unholy desires and mistaken forbidden petitions, the rock on which he kneeled.

A saving and beautiful word is this "howbeit" that kept Jesus in his darkest hour within the circle of the Father's wise and supreme will.

These elements of the Master's prayer are still the grounds and safeguards of prayer with us.

We also must take our stand on the omnipotence of God and be sure that he can command all the forces of the universe and cause them to work together for our good. We also may shrink in our human infirmity and fear from life's trials and agonies, but God knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust and will be patient with us and sufficient for us.

Yet we must trust him and meet every insurgence of our will with a "howbeit" that will put God's will over ours and accept it as best for us, even the fullest expression of the Father's love.

5. *The Model Prayer*

The Lord of prayer also taught us the prayer of the Lord.

It is a model prayer of marvelous simplicity and comprehensiveness.

The sentences are short and the words are the plain speech of the common people. There is not one hard theological word in it.

The whole prayer contains only six petitions that can be slowly uttered in less than half a minute.

Yet it sweeps heaven and earth in its range and grasp and leaves out no essential good thing.

It contains the roots and germs of all worship and blessing.

Its first note strikes the keynote of Christian faith and theology. It first makes God our Father and thereby assures us of a Father's blessing; and equally it makes us his children and asserts our kinship with God.

"Hallowed be thy name" is the first petition. We might think we could have made a better start. Should not some pressing human need have been put in the conspicuous forefront of this prayer? But it looks straight away from us and begins with divine interests.

Yet the prayer begins at the right point, for right relation with God is the central condition of all blessing. The prayer through its first three petitions continues to move along heavenly heights, seeking the interests of God.

It is the mountain tops, however, that keep the valleys green, and all our blessings must come from above.

The turning point of the prayer is at last reached. "Give us this day our daily bread." From the highest spiritual aspiration the prayer suddenly drops to the lowest physical need.

In the midst of the holiest longings of the soul the human stomach has something to say.

All the material conditions of life, bread, health, prosperity, are rightly the subject of prayer.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Having touched lightly upon our bodily needs, the prayer quickly bounds back into the spirit.

Such is the model prayer, short, simple, comprehensive, laying hold of the greatest blessings and rifling heaven and earth for our enrichment.

If we learn to pray after this manner, in this spirit, we shall know what things we ought to pray for, and whatsoever we ask shall be done unto us.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. On what other occasions in his ministry did Jesus pray?
2. Of what use are friends?
3. What part has suffering played in human progress?
4. What are some other great prayers in the Bible?
5. In what sense must we answer our own prayers?

LESSON V—JANUARY 30

The Christian Overcoming Temptation

Lesson: Luke 4:1-13; I Corinthians 10:12-13

Golden Text: In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. HEBREWS 2:18.

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:31-39.

Additional Material for Teachers: II Cor. 10:3-5; Phil. 4:11-13; Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Christ Helps the Tempted.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How to Overcome Temptation.

Lesson Text: Luke 4:1-13; I Corinthians 10:12-13

1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness

2 During forty days, being tempted of the devil. And he did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, he hungered.

3 And the devil said unto him, if thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread.

4 And Jesus answered unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

5 And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

9 And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10 For it is written,
He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee:

11 And,
On their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

13 And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *The Meaning of the Temptation.*
2. *An Appeal to Appetite.*
3. *A Short Cut to the Kingdom.*
4. *Leaping into Popularity.*
5. *The Whole Armor of God.*

Immediately after his baptism Jesus was led up into the wilderness to be tempted.

Baptism and temptation are here crowded close together.

Scarcely had the voice from heaven died away when a whisper was heard from hell. Out of the baptismal benediction of the Father, Jesus stepped into a desperate struggle with the devil.

There are sudden and violent changes of weather in the spiritual world.

It was while coming down from the mount where for forty days he had held communion with God that Moses lost his temper and smashed the tables of the law to pieces. It was just after leaving the communion table that Peter denied his Lord and swore that he did not know him.

The purest deed may be bordered with temptation; our finest moods may be marred by an evil suggestion.

When God is especially near blessing us, Satan is near by watching for his chance.

Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted. His temptation was no evil fate, but a divine appointment. Temptation has its place and use in the world.

There is nothing wrong on our part in being tempted: the wrong begins only when we begin to consent to it.

Yet we are not to run into temptation of our own accord. We may not hunt the devil and go into his den of our own will.

The path of duty as we are led of the Spirit will take us into temptation enough.

It was when Jesus was hungry and wasted with forty days' fasting and was reduced to the lowest point of physical exhaustion that this temptation struck him. Satan did not assault him at his strongest moment, but at his feeblest hour when his vitality was at its lowest ebb.

Satan knows a man's weakest time and waits for it. There are dangerous low tides in the strongest life.

The best man has his hours when he would not dare to meet the devil.

These irresolute moments are often connected with bodily exhaustion and nervous depression. We need to keep a constant grip on the strength of God that when we are weak we may be strong.

1. The Meaning of the Temptation

Before the conflict begins let us take a general view of it and consider its meaning.

What was the situation and state of mind with Jesus at this time?

He had just come up from his baptism which probably marked the moment when he became fully conscious of his Messiahship and divinity and supernatural power. He now knew he was the Son of God at whose bidding stones would turn into bread and water into wine.

Seized and overwhelmed with this mighty consciousness, Jesus went into the wilderness to meditate upon and determine how he was to handle this tremendous power.

What would be the first, most natural, strongest and most deadly temptation in the possession of such means?

To use it selfishly for personal ends.

This is the temptation that always arises in connection with the sudden acquisition of power, as when a man gains great wealth or high office.

Sudden power of any kind puts a severe strain on character and is a dangerous possession.

The pressing question on the mind of Jesus may have been, How would he use his divine power? For personal comfort and aggrandizement? or only in the service of God for the welfare of the world?

It was a critical and perilous moment with him. If he were to use his power one way, he would be lost; if he were to use it the other way, he would be saved and the world would be saved with him.

Satan saw this psychological moment, and he was there to try to push Jesus off the edge of the right use of his power into the bottomless pit.

This selfish use of power was the poisoned point of each of the three arrows that Satan shot at Jesus.

2. *An Appeal to Appetite*

"If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread."

The very tip of this temptation is a doubt.

This was the point of the first arrow of temptation Satan shot into the world so that he has not invented a new weapon or improved his old ones in thousands of years. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?"

Doubt is the mother of disobedience.

Get us to doubt God and truth and duty, and it is a short step into sin.

Jesus, having fasted forty days, craved food in every fiber of his body, and Satan kindled his appetite into a veritable fire with the thought of fresh fragrant bread.

The proposal was that he should get the bread, not by taking it away from others, but by creating it himself.

How innocent and reasonable and necessary and right this seemed!

But Jesus saw through its false innocence into its black heart, for it was a temptation to use his power for his own gratification, and if he did this once he would do it again, and in thus saving his life he would lose it.

Deeper still, this was practical distrust of God. Would not the Father provide, and shall he in his very first extremity cut loose from God and take care of himself?

So this seemingly innocent act would have been his first step away from his Father.

Therefore Jesus smote the evil thought with the trustful declaration, "Man shall not live by bread alone," and that temptation lay dead at his feet.

But it is not dead for us. Appetite is still for Satan our most vulnerable point of attack.

He not only plays upon our natural and rightful appetites, but he has created new and false ones with which he destroys men.

And how artfully is the plea of necessity made? "I must make a living and therefore continue in this evil business. I must compete with my rivals and cannot be too scrupulous about methods."

The necessity for bread is thus supposed to make any wrong right and to wipe out the whole decalogue. Anything to make money and get a living is the devil's creed.

But it is not necessary that we should live at all. There is only one moral necessity upon us: to trust God and keep his commandments.

3. A Short Cut to the Kingdom

"If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine." This was an appeal to Christ's human ambition, holding up before him a glittering, dazzling prize.

It was offering him a short cut to the universal kingdom he had come to gain through the slow pathway of the cross.

It was a temptation to resort to wordly means to get the unwordly kingdom. Why not win the kingdom in a moment by one little act, even get the whole world by a word? Alexander and Caesar had cut their way to power by a short road, and might not the thing be done again?

How frequent and strong is this temptation with us?

Satan spreads out before us, not all the kingdom of the world, but only some little portion of it: as much as we can see from our door-step, or over our counter or office desk; we want it, and many are willing to bend the knee to the devil to get it.

How strong is the temptation to take a short cut to our ambition?

The way of righteous getting, of slow growth, of patient toil and sacrifice, the way of the cross, is not to our liking. We want the kingdom at a stroke and are in danger of selling our souls to get it.

Jesus felt the full force of this temptation. He gazed upon the splendid picture and fascinating scene of that outspread world. He saw how short was the step to the promised throne.

Then turning in resistless might, he tore the mask from his tempter, revealed him in his hideous nakedness as Satan, bade him from his presence and declared his eternal allegiance and loyalty to God.

Another poison-tipped arrow failed to pierce the armor of Jesus and fell harmless at his feet.

4. Leaping into Popularity

"If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee." This temptation is just the opposite of the first one. Defeated on one side, Satan slips around and attacks Jesus on the other.

The first temptation was that Jesus should trust God too little: this one is that he should trust him too much; that he should be presumptuous in his trust.

It was a suggestion that he could fly from the appointed path of obedience to the laws of life off at any angle of wild caprice, that he could do just as he pleased, and God would keep him.

Even faith may become presumptuous and disobedient. We want God to keep us, not in all his, but in all our ways.

The faith cure, in so far as it refuses or neglects to use natural means, is virtually a proposal to jump from the pinnacle of the temple of natural law without getting hurt, to set medical means at defiance and expect God to work a miraculous deliverance.

This temptation also involved the use of Christ's power for a personal end.

For the object seems to have been that he should gain the applause of the multitude and thereby get himself accepted as the Messiah; it was another short cut by which he was to leap into popularity. The Jews wanted a Messiah that would come with observation in power and pomp; and this advent from the temple would be received with such popular enthusiasm that it might make Jesus king at a jump.

But he saw through this proposal also, and smote it with the declaration, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God."

The Son of God was still untouched; not one fleck had spotted the immaculate whiteness of his soul. And the devil, foiled, defeated and crushed, fled and vanished into the infinite darkness whence he came.

5. The Whole Armor of God

Mark the means by which Jesus resisted these temptations: "It is written." "It is written." "It is written."

The Word of God was his armor, and by it every flaming dart was quenched.

Yet it was not by the mere quoting of Scripture that Jesus defended himself, for the devil could quote Scripture too.

It was by his grip on the realities back of the words that he conquered.

The sense of God's Fatherhood, trust in him, steady sober obedience and unswerving loyalty to him, were his support.

He conquered by the ordinary means of grace.

He did not call into action his divinity, but he bore this temptation in his humanity.

He was tempted as we are and he conquered as we may.

We need no new weapons to resist Satan, for still "it is written."

The old Bible furnishes shields and swords to match all the temptations of our modern life. What we need in our temptation is a stronger grasp on these eternal verities of God's Word.

In proportion as we believe and feel these truths shall we have power to resist evil; and when our whole consciousness is filled with them Satan cannot touch us.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you; and when he is gone the angels of God will come.

And let us be specially on guard against thinking that we can stand in our own strength, for such presumption prepares the way to a fall.

But if we humbly and watchfully put our trust in God, he will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape that we may be able to endure it.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Was this the only temptation that Jesus met and mastered?
2. Why does God permit temptation in our world?
3. Give instances of how prophets and apostles were tempted.
4. Describe "the whole armor of God."
5. How can we guard against temptation?

LESSON VI—FEBRUARY 6

The Practice of Christian Stewardship

Lesson: Matthew 25:14-30

Golden Text: Thou hast been faithful over a f hings, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of TTHEW 25:21.

Devotional Reading: II C

Additional Mater I Cor. 4:1-2; I Pet. 4:7-11

active Shelf

e a Steward.

pirit of Christian

him, Well done, vant: thou hast w things, I will ngs; enter thou

eived the one ord, I knew man, reap- sow, and ot scatter;

1

away and lo, thou

17 th

18 B d unto awa vant, his l owed

19 Now ter; those out a recko at

20 And he ved came an saying, I me five ta erefore the talent five talents. give it unto him that ten talents.

21 His lord s good and fa been faithful will set thee over enter thou into the joy of

22 And he also that *received* the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away.

30 And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weepi and the gnashing of teeth.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Gifts Differing.*
2. *Use and Growth.*
3. *The Day of Reckoning.*
4. *Failure and Judgment.*

Parables are pictures of moral truth; they make spiritual principles visible and vivid.

All the world loves a story, and Jesus was master of the art of telling stories that have ever since instructed the world.

In this parable we have sharply outlined before us and impressed upon us the fact that all our gifts and goods are bestowed upon us as stewards that we may put them to their right use and for which we shall be held accountable.

Life is not simply pleasure, but it is business, even the Lord's business and should so be conducted.

1. Gifts Differing

Five talents, two talents, one talent—such are the differences in the endowments and opportunities of people.

Men differ in talents from idiocy to genius, from pauperism to plutocratic wealth, from narrow circumstances to the widest opportunities, from native coarseness and viciousness of disposition to spirituality of temperament.

These differences in men are the roots of many of the differences outside of men, the inequalities of society that often present such frightful aspects and so sorely perplex our minds and burden our hearts.

The socialist dreamer would like to level these outer inequalities and make all men equal in condition and comfort.

But the thing cannot be done, and if it were done it would not stay done.

As long as men are unequal in internal constitution they must be unequal in external condition. If all men were made equal in their circumstances today, no power on earth could keep them so, and they would again be unequal tomorrow.

We might as well think to make grass and weeds alike by mowing them all down to the same level. They would all look alike for a time, but they would soon grow up again, and the grass would still be grass and the weeds would still be weeds.

We must accept this unequal distribution of constitutional talents as the sovereign act of God.

Not meaning, of course, that there is not much human injustice mixed up with these inequalities which we should try to correct, but some inequalities of personal constitution and condition are inevitable and are even necessary and good.

Each one has at least one talent and has no right to complain; and out of "gifts differing" spring the variety and picturesqueness and even the progress of life.

If all people were precisely alike, to what a monotonous and dreary level would this reduce the world? What would become of music if all instruments uttered only the same note? How instantly would all paintings vanish and all beauty be swept from the earth and sky if all colors were suddenly changed into the same shade?

Not less disastrous would be the result if all hearts were tuned to the same temperament, all brains cast in the same mold, and all faces formed into the same features. All music and color would vanish from our life.

It is useless and wrong to fret and rebel against these native inequalities in our human world. Let us accept this sovereign distribution of talents, and be thankful for our own.

2. Use and Growth

These differing talents were put to use and immediately began to grow. The five talents became ten, and the two became four.

Our personal constitution and circumstances are not fixed quantities that never can be changed, but are seeds capable of indefinite growth and multiplication.

The human mind starts as a tiny germ, but it may be developed into the philosopher's intellect that weighs the earth and measures the stars. Whatever may be one's native mental outfit, he can expand it indefinitely in power and service. The dull boy cannot become a genius, but he may train his slow intellect into a more rapid pace and surprising power, and turn his one talent into two or ten.

Moral and spiritual faculties follow the same law.

Circumstances and opportunities, however narrow and rigid, may have their bonds burst asunder into wider liberty and richer life. A few dollars may be turned into a fortune.

This process is effected by trading; not by idleness, luck, speculation, cunning, cheating, or any device by which men try to get something for nothing, but by the profitable exchange of goods or mutual service.

Wealth remains simply so much wealth as long as it is stored up in a warehouse or bank, but when it is invested in productive processes, it becomes reproductive and multiplies itself many fold.

It is useful service that turns seeds into harvests, raw materials into fine goods, one dollar into two or ten, and a thousand into a million.

The same law runs up into higher fields.

We cannot reap a harvest from the mind unless we sow it with seed and cultivate it. Truth grows by trading, the exchange of thought, the useful employment of the knowledge we have. When we invest our truth, teaching it to others or turning it to practical service, it immediately begins to grow clearer in our own minds and to widen out its boundaries, and thus it multiplies its talents.

Faith, purity, patience, gentleness, unselfishness, love, all spiritual faculties and fruits grow in the same way.

When we hoard these up and keep them from use, they wither away; but when we invest them in trading, in mutual exchange and service, they multiply many fold.

Let us never think we can evade this law and multiply our talents by any other process.

All clever devices by which we try to get more talents without using the talents we have are as futile as trying to trick nature into giving us a harvest without giving it our seed.

3. The Day of Reckoning

After a long time the lord of the servants returned and made a reckoning with them.

It often takes a long time to develop talents, and the Lord gives us plenty of time.

We must not expect to reach rapid results and grow impatient at slow processes. The acorn multiplies its tiny talent thousands of times, yet it takes many summers and winters to do it.

But however long the Lord may delay his coming, he is sure to come at last and call his servants to account.

They are his servants and the talents he entrusted to them are his, and he has a right to demand a reckoning. He did not give us these talents in absolute ownership, but only loaned them to us; and he did not lend them to us that we might let them wither away in idleness, or waste them in riotous living, but that we might put them to service and return his capital with interest.

God himself is continually investing his own talents and making new seeds to bloom and stars to shine. The Father worketh, and he would have his sons work too.

The first servant brought his five talents with five talents more.

By trading he had doubled his capital; useful service and exchange had made him rich.

And the same service had made others richer also: for no one can honestly get rich himself without helping to make others rich.

All true exchange of goods pays at both ends of the bargain. Especially is this the case in the spiritual sphere.

We cannot grow in grace ourselves without helping others to grow in grace.

The five-talent man was pronounced a good and faithful servant, a great reward in itself.

One who has this consciousness cannot very well be unhappy; he has a well of water springing up within himself.

Having been faithful over a few things, he was set over many things.

Life is full of this law. Business thrives on this principle.

Faithful men in lower ranks of service are constantly being called up into higher ranks and reaching the top. "Seest thou a man diligent in business? He shall stand before kings."

The great captains of industry do not get their places by favoritism or accident: they are the survival of the fittest.

Faithfulness over a few things has made them ruler over many things.

The way to get a higher position or reward is to cram the position we are in full of faithful service and the reward is sure to come.

4. Failure and Judgment

Where two men succeeded one man failed, and the cause of his failure was not in his single talent or his circumstances, but in himself.

He received only one talent, but even one talent is a large sum. The most poorly equipped man has received much.

This man had a confession to make. He thought his lord was a hard master, demanding much where he had given little, and so he hid his talent.

This is a complaint that many a man yet makes: he has not been fairly treated in the world, no chance to do anything has been given to him, and so he nurses his grievance and will not try.

But every one has been given at least one talent, and one is enough, if it is put to the right use.

Some one-talent men have done notable things in this world.

Look at Abraham Lincoln, after a hard day's work holding his book close to the flickering blaze of a pine knot that he might spell out the words of a rudimentary education: who then would have thought him more than a one-talent boy? Yet he turned that one talent into thousands more and with that pine torch kindled a blaze of light that illuminated a continent and is still shining in the world.

There is no telling what one talent may grow into when it is faithfully used and fully developed.

It is a great mistake to think that one talent is too small to be worth using; that one talent may be a seed that will scatter its bloom over the world.

One talent may at least be turned into two, and that is as great a work as turning five into ten.

The one-talent man may be as useful and meritorious in his way as the five-talent man. It is not the number of the talents we have, but the use we make of them and the ratio of their increase that measure our faithfulness and determine our reward.

To hide our one talent in the earth, to bury it in neglect or waste it in wrong living, is the poorest and guiltiest possible way of using it.

This man's confession was turned into his own condemnation. Out of his own mouth he was convicted.

If he thought his lord a hard master, he should have made some effort to meet his demands and at least have put his money in the bank where it would have earned interest.

"Thou wicked and slothful servant," were the withering words that fell upon him, and his one talent was taken from him and given to the man with the ten talents who had showed his ability and willingness to use talents well.

This is not an arbitrary judgment but a universal law of life.

The man that is unfaithful in the use of his gifts and goods will lose them and they will pass into other hands where they will be put to their right use.

All our powers and possessions are entrusted to us as the stewards of the Lord, and we are required to use them so that they will multiply and enrich the world. If we are faithful we shall reap a rich reward, but if we are unfaithful we shall lose what we have and be cast off as unprofitable servants.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Compare this parable with the parable of the pounds.
2. Discriminate just from unjust differences among men.
3. How shall we learn to be content with such things as we have?
4. Give other instances of how a few things may grow into many things.
5. Show that every day is a day of reckoning with us.

LESSON VII—FEBRUARY 13

Making Our Homes Christian

Lesson: Ephesians 5:25-6:4

Golden Text: Let us love one another: for love is of God. I JOHN 4:7.

Devotional Reading: I Corinthians 13:1-7.

Additional Material for Teachers: Exodus 2:1-10; Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Unselfishness in the Home.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How to Make our Homes Christian.

Lesson Text: Ephesians 5:25-6:4

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it;

26 That he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word,

27 That he might present the church to himself a glorious *church*, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself:

29 For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church;

30 Because we are members of his body.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.

32 This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

33 Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and *let* the wife *see* that she fear her husband.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise),

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Duty of Wives to Husbands.***
2. ***Duty of Husbands to Wives.***
3. ***Christ and the Church.***

4. Duty of Children to Parents.
5. Duty of Parents to Children.

Few subjects in Paul's day needed more attention than did the home, for it was fast falling to pieces under Roman paganism, and few aspects of our modern world are showing graver symptoms of disorder.

The divorce problem in our country is one of our greatest perils as the ratio of divorces to marriages in America far exceeds that of any other country and has increased fourfold in the last fifty years.

There are symptoms, also, that the children of our day are less subject to the discipline of the home and more given to laxness in parental respect and obedience than the children of earlier generations.

Any such weakness and disorder in the home is one of the gravest perils of society, for it unlooses the bonds that hold it together and undermines its deepest foundations. The home is really the unit of society and sustains the same relation to its health and vitality as do the cells to the body.

If the home declines, religion will decline and society will dissolve its bonds.

This lesson goes to the roots of the problems of the home and deals with all its members with an impartial hand.

1. Duty of Wives to Husbands

We may well wonder why the International Lesson Committee in selecting the Scripture for this lesson did not begin it with verses 22-24, dealing with the duty of wives. Were they a bit squeamish about enjoining obedience upon wives and passed them by and began with husbands?

This appears to be a general tendency in our day and the word "obey" is now often if not generally omitted from the marriage service.

Now that woman has come into social and civil equality with man, are we somewhat timid in her presence and afraid to displease her, even to the extent of quietly dropping the Scripture teaching as it applies to her from this lesson?

However this may be, we make bold to include these verses in this lesson and begin with the admonition, "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be subject to their husbands in everything."

Paul was brave enough to say this and we shall say it still. It needs to be said for it expresses a fundamental truth in the foundation and constitution of the home.

Of course, this may be said in a sense that is not true and that would rightly call forth objection and indignation.

It is not true that the wife is in servile subjection to her husband as though he were master and she were slave, or as though he had arbitrary authority over her and she were subject to the dictation of his will.

This has been the relation of the wife in times past and as late as Shakespeare's day he could make one of his characters say of his wife, "she is my horse, my ox, my anything." But this time is long past in any Christian land though this relation still lingers in some other places.

The relation of husband and wife is that of unity and fellowship, dwelling in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and love. Nevertheless, even in such a relation there must be a head, a "primus inter pares," a presiding member who shall decide and speak for the whole unit.

It is so in any firm or corporation or society or government. However equal the members may be, administrative authority must be lodged and exercised in some head and hand, and this does not in the least involve any humiliating or arbitrary subordination.

The wife should recognize and serve under this headship of her husband and not endeavor to usurp his place.

If she does not have the faith in and love for her intended husband to accept and observe this relation, then she should not enter into it.

In any rightly constituted marriage relation the question of "obeying" and "being in subjection unto" the husband never arises, for it is a partnership of mutual interest and confidence and love.

2. Duty of Husbands to Wives

The duty of the wife to the husband is balanced and blessed and made a delightful relation by the corresponding duty of the husband to the wife.

If Paul had omitted this side of the relation his subjection of the wife unto the husband would have been one-sided and harsh and false in its implications, but the old bachelor took no advantage of the wife but safeguarded her place in this partnership by enjoining upon husbands the duty that they should "love your wives."

If this love exists and controls and sweetens and beautifies the marriage relation, the wife will have no occasion to complain that she has been treated unfairly in the distribution of rights and duties.

Husbands should love their wives because they solicited and won their love through their love for them, and this fine and noble and beautiful affection was not simply a lover's net to lure the young woman into his confidence and tie her up in legal obligation to him and then let it wither away and die so that he ceases to love her and treats her as a burden on his hands and even casts her off.

This is the depth of baseness. The tie of love is to be so exercised and cherished that it will grow stronger and sweeter as the years go by.

It does this in countless instances and this is the ideal that all husbands and wives should strive to attain and enjoy.

In order that this love may continue and grow deeper and better, both husband and wife must cherish it and nourish it by all proper means and arts.

Those fine expressions of courtesy and appreciation by which he won her heart may he now cease these attentions and treat her as a

common thing and starve her heart? And has she no responsibilities in keeping this fine flame burning on the altar of his heart? May she drop all those attractions and winsome arts by which she wooed his love, grow careless and slatternly in dress and manner and cease to show any affection for him?

It is often such little rifts in the lute of love that, being slowly widened, finally silence its music. All arts and attractions, gifts and acts of appreciation should be used to feed the flames of love and keep them burning brightly on the altars of the heart. When this fine flame goes out, it leaves very bitter ashes that may be worse than death.

So, says Paul, the wise old bachelor, "do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear her husband."

If the relation be entered into and kept in this spirit, no rift will appear in the lute, but its music will keep in tune and grow richer and sweeter with all the years.

3. Christ and the Church

Paul never can keep far away from Christ and theology, and so he brings in the relation of Christ and the church as an illustration of the marriage relation. The illustration throws light both ways, both on the union of Christ and his church, and also on the union of husband and wife.

The basis of the relation of Christ to the church is that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Christ is the creator of the church.

He loved it before it ever loved him, choosing it when it were filthy rags of unrighteousness and washing it in the cleansing fountain of his own blood. He loved it as he saw it in his divine imagination, washed white without spot or wrinkle, a glorious church.

Such love binding him to his church and his church to him never can grow cold, but will endure as long as the sun and moon.

This is the kind of love that should bind husband and wife together. They loved each other with the warmth of youth and took each other for better or worse with all their faults and should ever hold fast to this first love.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh." No wedge or knife should be permitted to insert its thin edge into this union, but it should be regarded from the beginning to the end as indissoluble and final during life.

Let this tie bind husband and wife together, and divorce will not be thought of as a possibility and will seldom rend the relation apart.

This is the only secure basis of a Christian home, and if we would "make our homes Christian" we must first have this solid and permanent foundation.

4. Duty of Children to Parents

The home includes children as the completion of its ideal and purpose in the world. Their first and fundamental duty is, "Obey your parents in the Lord."

This duty rests on the fact that they owe to their parents their very existence and are dependent on them at every point and step in their lives.

Subsistence and protection, food and clothing and shelter, care and guidance, education and discipline, affection and companionship and joy—all are derived from their parents, and these carry with them the self-evident duty of appreciation and obedience.

Of course this obedience is not to be servile and slavish, but should be free and joyous, just what they delight to do.

A tremendous reason is given for this obedience, "for this is right."

A stronger word could not be used, for when we have said a thing is right we have put under it the eternal Rock of Ages and planted it on the very foundation of the stars.

It is right that children should obey their parents in the Lord, and any other relation is wrong and will work ruin.

"Honor thy father and mother . . . that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." It is no arbitrary arrangement by which honoring parents works out in length of days, for it is obedience to the laws of right, and such laws always contribute to length and fullness and richness of life.

Our American children need to have this truth and duty drilled into them from their earliest years.

They are charged with undue laxness of obedience and parental respect in the home, and such laxness will run on into lawlessness in the larger home of the community and state, and the end of such ways is disgrace and death.

5. Duty of Parents to Children

These duties in the home all run in pairs and are mutual relations. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord."

All these relations and duties must be exercised "in the Lord," in the atmosphere of reverence and trust and love, and then they will come true as certainly as does every point on the circumference of a circle come true to its center.

Fathers often provoke their children by unjust action or unkindness or high temper and anger, but these only provoke the children to angry reaction. Wrath in parents cannot cure anger in children, only kindness can beget kindness, and only a Christian spirit can create a Christian home.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Mention some beautiful homes in the Bible.
2. Give instances of other notable Christian homes in history.
3. What are some common failures and faults in our homes?
4. How can we make the home so attractice the members will not desire to leave it for outside allurements?
5. Is anything wrong with our divorce laws?

LESSON VIII—FEBRUARY 20

Serving in and through the Church

Lesson: Matthew 5:13-16; Acts 2:42-47

Golden Text: We are God's fellow-workers. I CORINTHIANS 3:9.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21.

Additional Material for Teachers: I Cor. 12:1-31; I Thess. 4:9-12, 5:12-15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Meaning of Church Membership

Topic for Young People and Adults: Living and Working together in the Church.

Lesson Text: Matthew 5:13-16; Acts 2:42-47

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do *men* light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house.

16 Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need.

46 And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Salt.***
2. ***Light.***
3. ***Stedfastness.***
4. ***Helpfulness.***
5. ***Conversions.***

Church membership should mean something and much.

Often it is a mere nominal relationship and means little or nothing.

Such members appeared very early in the history of the church. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead" (Rev. 3:1). There are between forty and fifty millions of nominal Christians in this country with their names on church rolls, and how "like a mighty army" would they move if they were all true soldiers of the cross.

Church membership meant something on the day of Pentecost and the days following that notable outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Had the same spirit of faith and fellowship and service continued to energize the church unabated down to our day, there is no telling how much farther on towards the kingdom of God the world would be today.

We need to gather converts into the church from the outside, but we also need to reconvert or revive many members inside.

The church itself needs to be more fully Christianized.

In our lesson we have illustrations in the first passage of what church members ought to be according to the teaching of Jesus, and in the second passage we have illustrations of what they were on the day of Pentecost.

1. Salt

The church member is to be as salt in the world.

Salt is an antiseptic agent, destroying the germs of disease and healing wounds.

Were it not for salt corruption would rapidly spoil much of our food and our bodies would be invaded by disease.

The Christian is to be an antiseptic to sin in the world.

His presence should destroy evil thoughts and words and deeds and be a healing element in society. He should be an incarnation of spir-

itual health that will be contagious in the community and world, a purifying presence that will cleanse corruption and heal diseases, wounds and woes.

Salt is also nutritious, a necessary element in our food without which we would slowly decline in health and die.

In places where it is very scarce, it becomes precious and commands a high price and men will risk their lives to obtain it.

The Christian spirit is absolutely essential to moral and social life and without it any community will decline and perish.

The righteous are the salt of the earth.

The world lives on righteousness and cannot live on sin, for sin is corruption and death. Take all the righteous people out of any community, and life will not be safe there and such a society would dissolve in its own iniquity.

Salt also gives flavor and relish to our food and without it our food becomes insipid and unpalatable.

The Christian should have a pleasant flavor in his character and spirit, his presence should add relish to social life. Christian life and fellowship should not be flat and stale, but savory and spicy. The idea sometimes entertained that church people are solemn and insipid and disagreeable is not true to the Christian ideal and reality.

Church members should be and generally are the most lively and interesting people in the world.

But when salt had lost its savor, as its high price often caused it to be adulterated to such a degree as to be useless, it was then cast out as refuse.

A church member so mixed and adulterated with the spirit of the world as to have lost his Christian virtue is thereby rendered spiritually useless and may be an injury to the church.

2. Light

Church members are to be the light of the world.

Light is illumination.

It scatters darkness and shadows and reveals all things, the face of friends, the path for our feet, the beauty of nature, the whole broad world in which we walk and work.

The Christian should be a light in the midst of the darkness of error and evil to disperse these shadows with the clear shining of Christian truth and grace.

Especially should he reveal God to the world as Father and Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Light is fire and force and energizes every living thing, causing the whole world to burst into bud and blossom and bear fruit.

The Christian should be filled with this divine fire and energy that kindles heat and inspiration in his own heart and in the hearts of others so as to quicken the world around him into growth and fruitage.

Light is beautiful, untwisting its beams into all the hues of the jeweled rainbow and spilling and splashing its colors over all the landscape and sky and sea.

It paints the clouds and kindles the gorgeous sunset. It dyes every leaf and tints every flower and turns garden, forest and mountain into a blaze of color and intinctures the sea.

Light is the supreme artist and produces all the masterpieces of beauty God has hung in the great gallery of the universe. Christ himself was beautiful and every follower of his should exhibit the same grace.

Light should shine out of the Christian in the colors and forms and features of his whole personality and make him attractice and lovely and lovable. A church member, Sunday school teacher or scholar, has no right to be ugly and repellent, unpleasant and disagreeable, in any aspect of his character and life, ungracious and discourteous in speech and manners, but he should incarnate the beauty of holiness.

Light is purity and peace, cheerfulness and joy, and these should stream through every act and grace of the Christian.

Wherever a church member goes the world should be brighter by his presence. Some people, even some Christians, are so pessimistic and gloomy and depressing that their presence casts dull, dismal shadows and their personality seems to drip with pitch oozing out of their very pores. Rather should the Christian be "Barrelled Sunlight," as the advertisement of a certain luminous paint declares it to be.

Jesus himself is the supreme incarnation of light. In him the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily so that he is pure light and in him is no darkness at all. On the Mount of Transfiguration he stood steeped in splendor, the inner light of his divine Person bursting through all the pores of his body and threads of his garments and thus revealing his hidden glory.

He still stands before us as the fullest revelation of God and the Light of the world and in following him we should in some degree shine with the same light.

3. Stedfastness

Passing on to the example set for church members by the disciples on the day of Pentecost let us note the point of their stedfastness in their faith and worship. "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers."

They not only began their Christian life with energy and enthusiasm, but they continued with unabated zeal in their faith and fellowship and attendance at church and worship.

They did not start out with burning zeal and rapid steps and then cool off and slow down and stop, but "continued stedfastly."

Great is the virtue of stedfast continuance in any field and pursuit of life.

There are many that begin well and end ill. At first they are enthusiastic and give promise of rapid progress, but their fire proves to be a blaze of straw and quickly burns out and leaves only ashes. How many enter upon a course of education or take up some profession or business, and then soon lose patience and courage and try something else?

This leakage is the greatest loss and weakness of the church.

Most converts begin promisingly, but presently many are found lagging and at length they drop out and their names are placed on the retired roll. The average congregation has a considerable proportion of its membership in this comatose condition or retired state. Their names may be still on the roll, but they are out of commission and not in service.

> The greatest need of the church is efficient church members: people that are salt and light; that have in them some healing virtue and are giving out heat.
>
> Stedfastness is a homely virtue that keeps the world going and is the saving health and staying substance and power of the church.
>
> "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

4. Helpfulness

These first church members exercised the spirit of mutual helpfulness in a rare degree. They "had all things common," selling all their goods and distributing the proceeds as each had need.

> Their plan was a system of communism which is not binding on us and did not work well or last long with them, but the spirit of their mutual helpfulness was splendid and shines across all these centuries as an example and inspiration for us.

We Christians ought to have provision and organized methods for helping one another in days of need. Many a philanthropic lodge or club puts the church to shame in this respect.

> We are not called upon to sell all our goods and hold the proceeds in a common treasury, but we ought to hold all our goods as the Lord's treasures of which we are but stewards and use them as his servants.

This involves the duty of looking after one another in such times and opportunities as may come to us. Especially should our churches provide for the support of their ministers when they are retired by age or invalidism and the same help should be extended in some measure to all the members.

5. *Conversions*

The last characteristic of these church members following the day of Pentecost was their steady ingathering of converts. "They continued in the prayers" and the result was that "the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved."

They had converts every day, and they had them because they made it their business to get them.

People were not converted without any means and efforts being used by the church members to seek and win them.

The ministers did not do all this work. They all "continued stedfastly" in attendance and prayer and worship, and out of this personal work came these daily converts.

Three thousand the first day was the great harvest they gathered.

This was twenty-five converts for each member, and we have exactly reversed this ratio and it now takes twenty-five church members a whole year to win one convert.

Are we Christians losing the art of winning souls to Christ?

When we do this the church will die and we shall die along with it. The slow percentage of growth of all Christian churches is due to the indifference and laxness of church members in this duty of winning converted souls.

Many church members never give an hour or a prayer or a thought to this work. The preacher is hired to do this, they may think.

But it is true today as on this Pentecostal day that we are saved that we may save others and this duty presses home on every Christian soul.

Let us give ourselves to it in stedfast prayer and consecration and the Lord will add to our churches day by day those that are saved.

"He that is wise winneth souls."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is salt?
2. What is light?
3. How do these illustrate Christian virtues?
4. How can we persevere in the Christian life?
5. What are some ways and means by which we can win converts?

LESSON IX—FEBRUARY 27

Making the Community Christian (Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: Galatians: 5:13-25

Golden Text: Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. EPHESIANS 5:11.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20.

Additional Material for Teachers: Ephesians 5:1-11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Self-control for the Sake of Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Works of Darkness and Works of Light.

Lesson Text: Galatians 5:13-25

13 For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only *use* not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.

14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties,

21 Envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 Meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.

24 And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.

25 If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Mutual Love.*
2. *Spirit and Flesh.*
3. *Works of the Flesh and of the Spirit.*

4. Crucifying the Flesh.
5. Walking in the Spirit.

A central thought of the Epistle to the Galatians is liberty in the spirit. "Stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage" is Paul's clarion cry.

While he had primary reference to the entangling yoke of bondage under the obsolete ceremonial law, yet the same principle applies to every fetter, and so this passage may be interpreted and applied as a temperance lesson.

1. Mutual Love

Christians should maintain relations of mutual love. "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Mutual love is a foundation stone of society, a tie that binds us all together in common help.

The interdependence of trade illustrates this truth. We have got far away from the condition in which each family supplied its own needs. The visitor at Mt. Vernon sees that Washington's family was a little community complete in itself. Carpenter shop, blacksmith forge, spinning house, and so on, showed that everything was produced on the spot and the family was self-supporting.

It is not so today, even with the largest and richest family establishments. Each family is a cell in a vast organism that draws its supplies from near and far, even from the ends of the earth.

Men today are tied together with thousands of filaments that bind them into solidarity in which they have many interests in common.

Cut these mutual ties and they would fall apart and quickly be reduced to want and would even perish.

It is therefore a primary duty of life to strengthen these ties and be faithful to them.

Love or good will is thus a vital law of our social life. But if we fall out and bite and devour one another, we shall surely be consumed of one another.

Such a spirit will destroy the beautiful dependence and harmony of our social life and turn it into a den of wild beasts.

Not only will our friendships, the finest thing in our life, be torn to pieces, but all social relations will be strained and ruptured, business will be ruined, and the whole web of life will be ripped and raveled to shreds.

Some people are so given to snarling and snapping at others that one can almost see the wild beast in them.

Let us get rid of this evil nature and love one another in spirit and in deed.

This is the first step towards making the community Christian.

2. *Spirit and Flesh*

With the Christian the spirit should be master and the flesh servant

Spirit and flesh stand for the higher and lower natures in man

The spirit is the part of our complex nature that is nearest and likest to the Spirit of God and is most open to his influence. The flesh is our lower nature of instinct and appetite and passion.

The flesh is not necessarily evil in itself, for it was created of God as a constituent part of our dual nature.

But it easily runs into wrong by reason of its disposition to usurp the place of the spirit and become the dominant element in our lives. In the unregenerated or partly Christianized man the flesh is rebellious and imperious and wants to have everything its own way.

In this state "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would."

The flesh is the part of our nature in which sin is most deeply lodged and in which it asserts itself most imperiously and defiantly.

Thus the soul is the seat of an internal war that throws it into discord and strife.

Every one knows this internal war in his own experience, and the better one is the more intense does it become and the more deeply is it felt. It was this that forced from Paul the almost despairing cry, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

The birth into the Christian life reverses this relation of flesh and spirit so as to put the spirit on the throne and the flesh in subjection.

The Christian walks or lives in the spirit and does not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The spirit is the dominant factor in his desires and deeds, and all his passions and appetites are held in subordination.

The lust of the flesh is not destroyed, appetite and passion are not killed, but they are ruled and trained so that they flow in the channel of the spirit and contribute to its power.

The flesh is transmuted and transfigured into the spirit.

The struggle of the Christian life is to reach this ideal.

The flesh still wars against his spirit, but he ever re-enforces the spirit and seeks to keep it on the throne and win for it the final victory in which its supremacy will give lasting unity and peace.

3. Works of the Flesh and of the Spirit

Catalogues are given of the works of the flesh and of the fruit of the spirit.

The first are a mass of evil, slimy and malignant, that we should fear to touch.

They may be divided into two general classes, sensual indulgences and evil feelings.

"Drunkenness" is one of the worst of the lot, worst in itself and worst because it breeds the others.

Drunkenness is preeminently a sin of the flesh, as it sinks the spirit in the flesh and lets all the passions of the flesh loose in inflamed and angry form.

It turns a man, however strong and keen may be his intellect and kindly his disposition, into an insensate and furious beast; the whole man, body, soul and spirit, becomes corrupt and stupid and degraded.

Drunkenness is also an unclean mother of all other works of the flesh.

There is no vice it does not intensify, no passion it does not inflame. It is impossible that a man should be a drunkard and not fall into the general ditch of degradation.

"A story is current in the Orient of a wise old sheik who gave to a young Arab prince, from whom he was about to part, a list of crimes and vices and bade him choose the one which seemed least harmful. The young prince told the patriarch he would choose intemperance. 'You have chosen that,' said the wise old man, 'which will bring you all.'"

In wide contrast with the works of the flesh stand the fruits of the spirit.

They are all things that are pure and good and beautiful and blessed. Of supreme importance among these fruits is "self-control" or that central rule over one's self that holds all the powers and appetites of body and mind in their proper subordination. This self-control is the crown we wear in the kingdom of our own soul and life, compacting them all into unity and causing them to march together as an army under the flag of conscience and the rule of the spirit.

This is the highest attainment and truest measure of the strength of a man, for he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city; he holds the central citadel and fortress of his own soul, and then the gates of hell cannot prevail against him.

The fruit of the spirit is not a wild growth, but the product of cultivation.

We must sow the right seed and give it proper conditions of soil and shower and sunshine in order that it may ripen into the blossom and fruit of the spirit.

The works of the flesh will thrive and luxuriate themselves, like weeds, but the fruit of the spirit calls for watchful care and faithful cultivation.

4. Crucifying the Flesh

How shall we win this victory of the spirit over the flesh and make it permanent?

It was this problem that brought Jesus Christ into the world and engaged the counsels of God from eternity.

Christ has come with the solution and he stands amongst us "mighty to save."

"And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." "They that are of Christ Jesus," that have been born of him and belong to him as a scholar belongs to a teacher, and a child to its mother; they that belong to him in unquestioning obedience as the soldier belongs to the general; they have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts and so have won the victory.

"Crucified" is a strong term, but it shows what we must do with our lower rebellious nature if we are to whip it into subjection to and temper it into harmony with our spirit.

Paul underwent this crucifixion so that he could testify, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."

The main secret of this victory is getting into such union and fellowship with Christ that he will be in us and then we shall easily and joyously live his life.

5. Walking in the Spirit

Very suggestive is Paul's admonition that "if we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk."

Walking is a general exercise and means that enters into all the activities of our life.

It carries us from place to place and helps us to carry on all the processes of our work. We can do few things without walking, and when we are deprived of this power we are gravely crippled and closely restricted in our life.

Walking by the spirit means that the spirit moves us in all our activities so that whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, we are guided and controlled by the spirit.

Walking is also an automatic activity that becomes ingrained in our whole personality, body and mind, as a habit so that we are able to carry it on without much conscious attention and effort.

In a large degree it takes care of itself while we attend to other things

So walking in the spirit may become a habit that operates with spontaneous ease and accuracy, requiring as little attention from us as our breathing. We live in the spirit and the spirit actuates us in all our thoughts and deeds.

The spirit of the artist expresses itself with unconscious facility and perfection in every stroke of his brush and shade of color on his canvas.

The spirit of Christ in the Christian moves him by an inward impulse and guidance in all his words and deeds.

Walking is also a progressive exercise moving towards an end.

It is not aimless wandering, but is going somewhere and converges all its steps to its destination.

Living in the spirit is also a progressive life, not slipping back into the old life or standing still in stagnation, but marching forward into greener fields and larger horizons and loftier visions and reaching higher summits and richer life.

Let us live in the spirit and all the old weeds of sin and works of the flesh will die out of our life, and the fruit of the spirit will abound and grow beautiful and blessed. Then also will the community become Christian.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was the trouble in the Galatian churches that called forth this Epistle from Paul?

2. How can we increase the spirit of good will and mutual helpfulness in the community?

3. What is the social gospel?

4. Is the church relaxing its teaching of temperance since prohibition has become a law?

5. To what extent is the church responsible for the enforcement of prohibition?

6. To what extent is drunkenness still a terrible individual curse and public evil?

LESSON X—MARCH 6

Sharing the Good News

Lesson: Acts 8:4-8; II Corinthians 5:14-20

Golden Text: Ye shall be my witnesses. Acts 1:8.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:1-7.

Additional Material for Teachers: Acts 1:6-11; 15:13-15; II Cor. 5:20—6:10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Telling our Companions about Jesus

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christian Evangelism: Duty, Methods, Results.

Lesson Text: Acts 8:4-8; II Corinthians 5:14-20

4 They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.

5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ.

6 And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did.

7 For *from* many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was much joy in that city.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died;

15 And he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.

16 Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know *him so* no more.

17 Wherefore if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.

18 But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech *you* on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Unpromising Soil.

2. Sowing the seed.

3. The Harvest.
4. Constraining Love.
5. Ambassadors.

We all like to tell good news and the best news in the world is the gospel of Christ, the gladdest tidings ever sent from heaven to earth.

Yet we are often strangely slow or reluctant to tell this news and may seal it behind silent lips and even conceal it in our lives.

Christ can be known, however, only as we make him known by our speech and spirit, and this is the great commission that has been committed unto us.

The first disciples and apostles carried out this mission with wonderful zeal and courage and success.

No sooner had they begun to tell the good news in Jerusalem than a great persecution broke out against them and that holy mountain top flamed with fire against the new faith. But persecution only scattered the believers and presently other cities near and far were infected with the new faith and the holy contagion began to spread around the world.

Philip, the evangelist, went down to Samaria and there started an evangelistic campaign that stirred the whole city and resulted in a multitude of conversions.

1. Unpromising Soil

Samaria was unpromising soil, a hard place to begin. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans; there was deep hereditary racial and religious enmity between them.

Philip, by the mere fact of his being a Jew, would stir up this enmity and set them against him.

Further, his message was the worst possible one he could bring. His gospel was that Jesus, a Jew and a crucified one at that, was the Christ or Messiah.

Now the main bone of contention between the Jews and Samaritans was, Which had the true worship?

Philip asked the Samaritans to give up their faith and come over on Jewish ground and accept Jesus, a Jew who had been put to death as a malefactor, as their Messiah.

Could there have been a bolder piece of effrontery, a more deadly insult to these people?

To make matters worse, there was in the city one Simon, a sorcerer, who had given out that he was some great one, admitting the fact himself, and he had hypnotized the people so that he had them under his thumb. He stood in the way of the gospel.

Putting these facts together, we see what a nest of enmity and opposition Philip got into. What chance did the gospel have in such a place as that?

No city missionary down in its slums, or home missionary out among the Mormons, or foreign missionary in a heathen land, ever had a more unpromising field.

Yet nothing daunted or discouraged, Philip went to work, and presently the gospel there proved to be the power of God unto salvation.

However hard our field or narrow our opportunities for telling the good news of the gospel, let us turn our discouragements into incentives and take courage and go forward.

2. Sowing the Seed

What did Philip do in this hard field? He "proclaimed unto them the Christ." He did not start a debate with the Samaritans and stir up the old points of controversy; he did not attack Simon and expose him as an imposter and fraud; he did not stop to tear down, but he began to build up.

If he had held back the truth until he had convinced the Samaritans that they were wrong and he was right, he never would have got to the gospel at all.

He began with Christ, and then presently Simon and all the old prejudices were swept out of the way.

The way to persuade a man of the truth is, not to try to prove that he is wrong, but to show him the right.

Foreign missionaries do not spend their time in attacking false religions, but in presenting the true religion.

The way to crowd evil out is to crowd good in.

The sun in the morning does not stop to quarrel with and quench our lamps and electric lights, but it just lets loose its own flood of splendor, and then presently men quietly slip around and put their little candles out.

The most effective way by which we can proclaim Christ is to let our light shine so that, others seeing our good works, will glorify our Father in heaven.

So Philip preached Christ that day in Samaria, and here we are, in the morning of the twentieth century, preaching the same Christ.

Is not this a wonderful fact and marvelous witness to him? Other prophets and systems have had their little day, but Christ lasts through the ages and ever widens his kingdom and more deeply roots himself in the human heart.

However hard and unpromising the soil, Philip simply sowed the seed and left the results with the Holy Spirit of God.

The preaching of Christ is still the business of every one of us.

Philip was not an apostle or minister, but a deacon, and the record is that the church members in Jerusalem were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word; and wherever we are or go we are to proclaim the same message.

Many are the ways in which we can tell the good news and sow this seed.

In preaching and teaching, by words in public or in private, through the daily contacts of life in friendship or business or casual meeting of a stranger, every day presents some opportunity for letting others know or feel our testimony for Christ, the impact upon their lives of our Christian presence and spirit.

3. The Harvest

What were the results of Philip's preaching in this hard field? "And

the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip." They listened to his preaching and looked at his miracles; they saw he was a man with a message for them, and they considered his message and believed in Jesus as the Christ.

Our first duty towards the gospel is to give it our heed.

If we will only think upon Christ honestly, earnestly, obediently, he will commend himself to our judgment and conscience and interweave himself into our mental associations and fasten himself upon our convictions and woo and win our hearts and then we shall believe upon him as our Master and Lord.

If the people thus give heed, the preacher will feel the electric interest and preach with new earnestness, and the Spirit will work with power.

Such attention is itself a revival and is sure of a blessing.

Unclean spirits were cast out and many palsied and lame people were healed.

There are still unclean spirits and palsied people in the world, and we do not need to go far to find them.

What are selfishness and envy, falseness and unfaithfulness, evil temper and passion but unclean spirits? And what are faculties and means that are neglected and unused, or perverted and wasted, but palsied powers? Uncleanness and palsy exist all around us, and they may be worst where they are least suspected.

Our deepest troubles are evil spirits that make their nests in our hearts.

It is no pious fiction but literal fact that the spirit of Jesus in us casts out these evil spirits. Conversion is cure, and holiness is health.

Next, "there was much joy in that city."

How could there be anything but joy with such work going on in the town?

There was the joy of purity and liberty and health, for unclean spirits are hard companions and masters to live with. There was the joy

of freedom from superstition and fear, for they were released from the black art and evil influence of the sorcerer Simon. There was the joy of the love of Christ, the joy of Christian fellowship, and the joy of eternal hope.

The gospel brought wonderful peace to these poor, persecuted, oppressed early Christians, and under its influence their hard life blossomed into joy.

Joy is what we all want, but we often make mistakes in the means by which we seek it.

There are pleasures that are spiced with sin and poisoned with death.

Pure joy can spring only from pure life, and pure life is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the abundant and joyous harvest Philip reaped from his sowing of the good seed in the unpromising soil of Samaria.

The gospel has lost none of its life-giving power in our day and can still make the wilderness and the solitary place rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Let us sow our seed and never weary, and though we may sow in tears, yet shall we come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us.

4. Constraining Love

Every deed is born of an idea, and every urgent idea is energized by a motive. When a man is driven forward against opposition towards a great objective there is some fire of desire and aspiration burning in his heart, some masterful emotion is propelling him as icebergs are driven through the sea against surface winds and currents, moved by deeper and more powerful currents.

What was Paul's deep-seated and powerful motive in all his missionary labors? "For the love of Christ constraineth us."

Christ's love for him had seized upon his inmost soul and turned all the currents of his being towards his Lord in love and moved all his life and labors in the channel of his will.

Of all the motives that move men, love is the deepest and finest and noblest, it will go farthest and last longest.

Constrained by love, men labor and suffer and will lay down life itself for wife and children, for home and country. Greater love hath no man than this that a man will lay down his life for his friends.

Paul was bound to Christ by such a tie of love and nothing could rupture or strain it.

Moved by this deep and abiding impulse he braved city mobs and mountain robbers and storm and shipwreck and Roman executioner's sword and was faithful unto his Lord even unto death.

And he had a great background to this constraining love for Christ's love for him was rooted in the eternal redemption of God whereby God reconciled us to himself through Christ.

Paul has compacted into the love of Christ which constrained him a great deal of deep theology that gave it a grand background and cosmic significance.

If we will only see Christ in his true relations to us and realize how he loved us and gave himself for us, we also shall be seized and mastered by such a sense of his love for us that we shall be constrained by it to love him and tell his message of good news to the world.

5. Ambassadors

An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank sent by one government as its resident representative to another, and the office is one of the greatest honor and responsibility.

Even so did Paul regard himself as an ambassador representing Christ, "as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God."

This is now verily the rank and office of every genuine Christian in this world.

In a true sense he represents Christ, speaking for him and offering his terms of forgiveness and life.

We ought to appreciate this high office and responsibility and endeavor so to live and speak that we shall worthily represent Christ and communicate and impart his good news to the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why were the Jews and Samaritans such enemies?
2. How much do we know about Philip?
3. Has the gospel in any degree spent its force or is it just as vital and powerful today?
4. Have any towns or cities today been converted and revolutionized as thoroughly as Samaria?
5. Why are so many church members unwilling to engage in personal evangelism?

LESSON XI—MARCH 13

Making the World Christian

Lesson: Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 16:6-15

Golden Text: Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Matthew 28:19.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 60:1-5.

Additional Material for Teachers: II Corinthians 11:23-29.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How We can Spread the Gospel.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christian Missions the Hope of the World.

Lesson Text: Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 16:6-15

16 But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.
17 And when they saw him, they worshipped *him* but some doubted.
18 And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.
19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;
7 And when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not;
8 And passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.
9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.
10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.
11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis;
12 And from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a *Roman* colony: and we were in this city tarrying certain days.
13 And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together.
14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.
15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Worship and Doubt.*
2. *Divine Power.*
3. *Human Cooperation.*
4. *A Worldwide Mission.*
5. *A Vision.*
6. *And a Conversion.*

Making the world Christian is a tremendous undertaking and it is fitting that its program should be announced on a mountain. There was no secrecy or mystery about it that it should have been concealed in solitude and silence.

This thing was not done in a corner, but out in the open and proclaimed from a mountain top.

And the message matched the mountain, massive and mighty in magnitude and power, with its base rooted deep in the earth and its summit lifted into the blue of heaven.

These are probably the sublimest words that ever fell from human lips.

They are more daring and revolutionary than any decree that ever issued from any emperor or council of state, and for nineteen centuries they have been shaping the religious and ethical history of the world.

1. Worship and Doubt

On this mountain gathered the company of the disciples to hear what the Master would say. Paul tells us that "above five hundred brethern at once" (I Cor. 15:6) saw the risen Jesus, and this may have been the occasion. Galilee was the chief scene of his ministry where he won most of his converts, and many of these may have been present.

"And when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted." They may have bowed or prostrated themselves before him after the Oriental manner, expressing their adoration.

Worship is our sense of worthship, and these believers thereby declared their belief in the divine rank and worth of the risen Christ.

Their faith had started with him as a man, but it now ended with him as the Son of God. They saw him in the light of the resurrection and their hearts went out to him in faith and fellowship, love and obedience.

The company that crowned that mountain top was the first fruits of the great and growing company of those that through all the ages shall crown Jesus Lord of all; and it was prophetic of the great multitude whom no man can number that shall finally stand before him in white.

It is because we can worship Christ that we also can work for him.

"But some doubted." The worship was not unanimous. Whatever the cause or the degree of this doubt, the damaging fact is boldly stated.

What an evidence is this of the truth of the writer and the trustworthiness of the record?

Imagine a petty lawyer arguing such a case before a jury, or a perfervid political orator expatiating on such a point before a partisan audience: would he admit that anyone doubted such a vital fact in his case or fundamental plank in his party's platform? No, he would declare that nobody doubted and that everybody believed: the worship was absolutely unanimous!

"But some doubted" calmly writes Matthew in his gospel.

He was there, and he says this because he is not making out a case but simply telling the truth.

We can trust a book that speaks in this way, and this is the method and spirit of the Bible all the way through.

Even the immediate disciples of Jesus had their doubts, and let us not be surprised and distressed if at times and in points we have the same experience.

2. Divine Power

When a man announces his program to the world we want to know what his credentials are, by what authority he speaks and what are his resources for carrying out his proposed plan.

Many philosophers and social dreamers have drawn up programs for reorganizing society and rebuilding the world, but their little schemes have come to naught because they had no sufficient wisdom in constructing them and no power to put them into operation.

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth," is the tremendous preface which Jesus puts before his program.

He did not set out on an enterprise of world-redemption without counting the cost and seeing that he had the means, and nothing in it shall fail which all power can accomplish.

Heaven is on the side of Jesus Christ and wheels all its battalions into line under his banner.

He and the Father are one, and this gives him all the power that resides in God.

The power that framed the universe and forged the burning suns on the anvil of creation is at the disposal of Jesus; the constellations are marching with him and are his silent and eternal allies.

This power flows down into and envelops the earth.

The whole framework of nature is plastic and obedient to Christ's touch. All the streams of human energy, manufacture and commerce, invention and discovery, enterprise and adventure, war and peace, flow in channels that are shaped and guided or at least limited by his hand. The human mind and heart are open to the play of his truth and love.

The glorified Christ is not a distant or indifferent spectator of the whirling panorama of this world and the roaring loom of time, but he sets and moves its scenes and with majestic dignity and sovereignty he solemnly declares, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."

3. Human Cooperation

Since all power can do all things, we might think and expect that Jesus would with his own hand immediately make the world Christian.

But this is not his program. "Go ye therefore," is the divine logic of his procedure.

Divine power must have human means through which to work.

The electricity of heaven's omnipotence must have an earthly wire along which to flow and flash.

What enormous power is stored up in the boiler of a steam hammer. The hammer head, weighing possibly half a ton, shoots down like lightning and strikes a tremendous blow that crushes a mass of steel, and then again it slips down gently and delivers the lightest tap that would not hurt a child's finger. What controls and guides it? The workman's hand on the lever. The mighty power of the steam and the puny power of the human hand work together in beautiful harmony. Either without the other could do nothing constructive, but both working together forge huge axles on which will roll the world's commerce, or mighty shafts or anchors that will drive ships through foaming seas or hold them in the fiercest storms.

So the power of divine authority is lodged in the glorified Christ,

but it waits for human hands to guide it in order that it may work constructively and strike mighty blows of judgment or slip down in the gentlest accents of love.

He stands back of us with his power, but we must go at his bidding.

From the mountain top of his ascension his disciples started forth on this mission, radiating from that center, and they have gone on until they have everywhere reached the rim of the planet.

We now stand in their succession and are carrying on the same commission, and in home and foreign missions we are engaged in making the world Christian.

4. A Worldwide Mission

On what mission were they sent? To overrun the world with armies and beat it into submission with the sword? No, but to "make disciples of all the nations."

Standing on that Galilean mountain top Christ gives commands to and makes room in his kingdom for "all the nations."

Jesus was no provincial Jew or parochial schoolmaster or local philosopher, but he was a universal Teacher and world Saviour overleaping all horizons.

Christianity is no national or racial religion, it refuses to stop at any mountain range or ocean shore, but like the atmosphere it overflows all boundaries and obstructions and must envelop the globe.

The nations are to be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism symbolizes saturating power, and the nations are thus to be filled with the Spirit of the triune God.

They are also to be taught to observe the teachings of Christ. This program is not a superficial process, glossing over the surface of life with a mere gilding of profession, but a regenerating power that penetrates to the core of society and renews it all in the Christian character and spirit.

The gospel is the true program and power of social reconstruction by means of individual regeneration, leavening the whole lump and mass of the world by leavening each individual particle with new life It is no paper program but a rock foundation deep and broad and solid enough on which to rear a new world.

It is our mission to lay this foundation and build this structure.

5. A Vision

Our lesson, illustrating the practical process of making the world Christian, passes to the vision which appeared to Paul in the night at Troas in which he heard a voice, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

Vision means sight and we must see things before we can do them.

Vision is imagination hearing voices and seeing ideals that lure and urge us on to higher things.

All the great achievements of men are born of vision.

And this is just as true in religion as in discovery and invention and art. The prophets were men of vision seeing the flower in the bud and the noonday in the first gleam of the morning. Jesus had divine vision as he looked through the ages and foretold the coming of his kingdom.

Instantly Paul translated his vision into advance, setting sail from Troas and making a straight course for Europe.

This was the greatest crossing of history, fraught with immensely more important consequences than those that attended Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, or Columbus's crossing the Atlantic.

And the gospel is still advancing, and every month new missionaries are sailing seas to occupy new stations in heathen lands. This work is still ours, and if we are not called to go in person to far shores, then we are called upon to help supply the ships and support the missionaries that the work of making the world Christian may keep moving on to the ends of the earth.

6. And a Conversion

The "man of Macedonia" that Paul heard calling him turned out to be a woman, and woman is generally the first to hear the gospel in pagan lands. Lydia was a business woman, a shopkeeper dealing in purple, and woman is now pressing through every door into business and the professions.

She was the first convert in Europe and the steps of her conversion still mark the path that leads into the Christian life.

She went to prayer meeting, heard the truth, had her heart opened by the Lord, gave earnest attention to the truth she heard, was baptized and entered upon a life of service.

These were the orderly and gradual steps of this beautiful conversion, all logically leading one into another and joined together like loops of gold.

This golden chain has been lengthened by joining link to link until it has reached each one of us and we are to keep extending it by adding additional links until it reaches around the globe and binds it to the feet of God.

Thus we are to carry out the great commission at home and abroad and this is the all-sufficient and only way of making the world Christian.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is this an age of doubt or of faith?
2. How can we meet the doubt of our day?
3. Illustrate divine and human coöperation in all the fields of life.
4. Illustrate the place and power of vision in our human world.
5. Is foreign missions in some worthy degree carrying out the great commission?

LESSON XII—MARCH 20

The Christian's Hope

Lesson: John 14:1-3; II Corinthians 5:1-10: I John 3:2-3

Golden Text: In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. JOHN 14:2.

Devotional Reading: Revelation 21:1-7.

Additional Material for Teachers: Matt. 26:34-40; I Thess. 4:16-18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Our Heavenly Home.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Beauty and Power of the Christian's Hope.

Lesson Text: John 14:1-3; II Corinthians 5:1-10; I John 3:2-3

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.
2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.
2 For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven:
3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.
4 For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.
5 Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit.
6 Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord
7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight);
8 We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.
9 Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him.
10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

2 Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.
3 And every one that hath this hope *set* on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Troubled Hearts.*
2. *Triumphal Chords.*
3. *The Earthly Tabernacle and the Eternal House.*
4. *Courage.*
5. *Children of God.*

The belief in immortality is one of the oldest and most universal faiths in the world. Primitive literature in every language is saturated with this belief, and the oldest human remains bear witness to this faith.

Put this light out and this world is left without a gleam of enduring worth and hope.

Pagan faiths were at best but dim twilight on the borderland of the other world, but Christ brought life and immortality to light.

He was a traveler returned from the other world and it was as sure and solid to him as this world. He spoke in clear terms of assurance and his disciples had such confidence in his teaching on this point that they followed him through persecution and death with unfaltering faith.

Judas had gone out from the Supper to execute his dark design of betrayal and Jesus and his eleven true disciples were left alone. The Master announced that he would be with them only a little while. The shadow of the cross was deepening and the storm of conspiracy and death was about to break.

All were troubled—except one.

The Master remained calm and strong; and he spoke words that shine like a jeweled bow on this dark cloud; he uttered promises that floated out of that storm in immortal music that shall comfort the world till time shall be no more.

1. Troubled Hearts

"Let not your heart be troubled" is the fundamental theme that interweaves itself through all the strains and chords of this grand

symphony, the melodic germ that blooms into all this matchless music.

Sorrow, of course, must pour itself out in grief and tears, the wounded heart must bleed.

The Bible is not an iron book that would crush our feelings into insensibility.

Yet the soul in sorrow should not be lashed and torn like an angry sea, but should possess itself in patience and its central depths should be unstirred in serenity and peace.

Jesus gives profound and powerful reasons for this untroubled heart.

"Believe in God" is the tonic note of this comfort, the corner stone that can sustain the intolerable weight of this weary world and shape it into peace.

When we know that God reigns we know that no atom man slip out of its place, that no creaturely will can thwart his purpose, and that all things work together for good to them that love him.

"Believe also in me" is the second note in this chord growing out of and completing the first.

Christ is the manifestation of God, revealing his heart of sympathy and love. Therefore faith in God finds its logical completion and crown in Christ.

Jesus comforts troubled hearts by drawing them in sympathy to himself and enfolding them in the Fatherhood of God.

Trust God and then trust Jesus -this is the cure for all our trials and sorrows, a song in the night that can sing our troubled hearts to sleep.

2. *Triumphal Chords*

The Master now wove this primal faith into triumphal chords. "In my Father's house are many mansions."

He opens the door into the other world and shows us that it is not a dark void where our conscious life is lost in oblivion, but a many-roomed, many-storied house, a grand mansion where our

Father makes his home and has abundant room and hospitality for his children.

The astronomers are disclosing to us an immensely vaster universe than even they had conceived, but even its frontiers do not limit our Father's house.

"If it were not so, I would have told you."

Of course he would, for he always tells the truth.

Would he leave us under delusion on so vital a matter as the future life? No, his whole life and character are pledged to tell us the truth on this point, and we can trust him.

"I go to prepare a place for you." Wonderfully suggestive and comforting words are these.

Jesus Christ has not vanished into nothingness, but has gone to a place.

He knew whither he was going and simply stepped through the door of death into his Father's home.

Jesus has gone to prepare this place—then he is still at work.

Heaven is not a world of eternal idleness and stagnation, but of intense activities where all powers are urged unto their utmost and the mightiest plans are being executed and where God himself is doing his best.

Since this world has been furnished so beautifully, how richly and grandly will that world be fitted up after it has had lavished upon it all the wealth of Christ and felt the finishing touch of his hand.

Jesus has gone "to prepare a place for you,"—then he is still our servant; still is the Lord of creation building a home for his children and enriching it with his treasures.

Then is there also room in that place for us.

This hope of an eternal home has been and is one of the most persistent and profoundest longings and comforts of this world, singing a soothing and inspiring strain to all its sorrows; and

were this song hushed, earth would have no hope and the tonic notes of its music would be a lost chord.

3. The Earthly Tabernacle and the Eternal House

Paul takes up the Christian's hope and tells us something about the body that we have now and that we shall have.

The present body is an earthly tabernacle, a temporary tent in which we dwell for a little while before it is torn down and crumbles back into dust.

It is a useful body and has many good qualities, especially when it has health and strength, grace and beauty.

Life may then flow through it in a stream of power and pleasure and it may serve us well.

Nevertheless at its best it is only a tent of flesh and is subject to all manner of infirmities and diseases and pains so that it may be best described as "a muddy vesture of decay," that cripples and torments us, and then "indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened."

Often does the body so weigh us down and shoot sharp pains through us and stab us as with knives that we fain would be set free from it as from a prison house and chamber of torture.

Yet even then we would not cast it off by our own hand and thus defy heaven's decree against self-slaughter.

"Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon"; we would earnestly desire and at times cry out for a better body, "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."

This is the promise of Christian immortality.

Death will not strip us naked and send us into the other world as ghosts, but will clothe us with a body which Paul more fully describes in the Fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory;

it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

We cannot know or imagine the nature of this wonderful body adapted to the spiritual and eternal world, for we have no experience of that world and cannot have until we have passed into it.

In the evolution of life the body keeps pace with the needs of the soul, and therefore the heavenly body will correspond with the glorified spirit.

It may be endowed with new senses through which life will pour in upon us in new streams of knowledge and beauty.

Our senses are so many windows opening out upon the world, and our present bodies are transparent at only five points; but the spiritual body may be transparent through and through, clear as crystal, through which we can look out upon every aspect of the world.

It may also be armed with unknown powers of communication by which we can hold converse with distant places and persons and of transmission by which we can pass with incredible swiftness from point to point and even from world to world.

We do not know what we shall be, but we may well believe that as the seed is to the fullblown flower, and as the slow-moving, shaggy and repulsive caterpillar is to the swift-winged, gorgeously-arrayed butterfly so is this present body to that glorified body with which we shall be clothed upon.

4. Courage

In view of such a habitation Paul sounds a note of courage. "Being therefore always of good courage . . . we are of good courage, I say,"

Our whole earthly life is discipline, and this is the deepest meaning of its struggles and failures, its sufferings and sorrows, its temptations and trials and tragedies.

The heavenly Father is educating us in the things of the spirit and developing us into pure and strong, fine and rich character.

Many of the pages of life's book are bordered with black and stained with tears, but such pages teach us lessons that could not otherwise be learned.

Death cuts the leash of this discipline and sets us free. Death is graduation day.

It is the commencement of real life when we shall enter into the fellowship of the spirits of just men made perfect, the ideal socialism of heaven, and into the service of eternity.

Then shall we know life in its developed maturity and freedom and power and shall thrill with and revel in the beatific life of God.

Therefore we should always be "of good courage . . . whilst we are at home in the body," while we are in this lower earthly school and are preparing for the grand place and splendid life of the eternal world. With this hope in view, this life is worth all it costs in toil and tears and tragedies, for its light afflictions are but for a moment and are working out for us an eternal weight of glory.

Wherefore let us comfort one another with these words and always abound in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

5. *Children of God*

John also joins in this symphony of eternal hope and adds his note to the song. "Beloved, now are we the children of God."

That ought to settle our doubts on this subject.

The Fatherhood of God is a strong ground for trust in this hope. God having brought forth his human children can never be the same without them. They are the objects of his fatherly love and have their home in his heart.

And the children never can be complete and satisfied without the Father. Without him they are waifs in a fatherless world, infants crying in the night and with no father to hear their cry.

God himself has implanted the spirit of childhood in the human heart, and will he not be faithful to his own work?

To suppose that he is begetting children and endowing them with immortal capacities and hopes only to disappoint them, as one would blow iridescent bubbles only to see them burst, is to suppose that he is making cruel sport with his children and is a fateful and fearful monster more dreadful than any human father could be.

The human family has ever thought better of its Father, and we trust him that he will not cast us to the void but will take us home into his eternal heart.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.
—Tennyson.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How did Jesus get his knowledge of the other world?
2. What other teaching did Jesus give on immortality?
3. Is immortality taught in the Old Testament?
4. What is the matter with our bodies and how can we have better ones?
5. Give other grounds of belief in immortality.

LESSON XIII—MARCH 27

Review: Studies in the Christian Life

Golden Text: If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. John 14:15.

Devotional Reading: Revelation 7:9-17.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What It Means to be Christian.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Marks of a True Christian.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Means of the Christian Life.
2. The Field of the Christian Life.
3. The Spirit of the Christian Life.

We have been studying "the Christian way of living in our day" and have found that these selections from the early Christian literature have fitted closely into our time.

Though these early Christians are separated from us so far in time and country and especially in the whole complex web of civilization, yet they were singularly like us and we are like them so that we can hold their experiences up as a mirror and see our own faces, or we can apply their principles and find they afford practical guidance and inspiration for us in living the Christian life.

The Christian way of living implies that there are means of carrying it on, a field in which it is to be applied, and a spirit in which it is to be lived, and these three points are richly illustrated in these lessons.

1. The Means of the Christian Life

The first and fundamental means of the Christian life consists in following Christ, illustrated in Lesson I.

These four fishermen received a call from Jesus to follow him and they forthwith obeyed, leaving their boats and nets behind.

They were common toilers engaged in their business, but Jesus went to them and took them as they were and they gave up all their pursuits and possessions and followed him.

Essentially the same call comes to us and we become Christians simply by accepting Christ as our Lord and setting out to do his will.

This may not require us to give up our business, but it will require us to subordinate our business to his service and use it as a means to carry out his business.

The call to follow Jesus came in a different form to Matthew the tax collector, and there is something special and personal in each one's call to enter the Christian life.

Another means of the Christian life is a standard of its aims and spirit and we have this in Lesson II.

The Sermon on the Mount sets forth the ideal and outcome of the Christian life, which is the kingdom of God in the heart, and it may be said to contain the constitution and by-laws of this kingdom.

The Golden Rule is the core of this kingdom in the heart and as this is expanded into all life it requires us to consider everyone in the light of brotherhood in which we are to extend to him every good that we could rightly wish him to bestow upon us. The same rule is to be extended to classes and races and churches and political parties and even to nations.

A further and fuller means to the Christian life is the Bible which is brought before us in Lesson III.

The Bible is our richest literary and religious inheritance. It was secreted out of the spiritual experience of the Hebrew people as they were guided and inspired of God.

The Hebrew poured his throbbing soul into this book so that it flames with his ardent dreams and aspirations, is jubilant with his hopes and joys, stained with his sins and sobs with his sorrows.

Yet it never seems far away from us as though it belonged to another race and time, but comes home to our business and

bosoms and is ever up to date and the most modern book in the world.

As we study it and hide it in our hearts, it reappears in our Christian spirit and life.

Prayer is a vital means of the Christian life as is illustrated in Lesson IV.

Jesus himself prayed and therefore he can teach us to pray.

Prayer was his vital breath which he breathed in common with God, and it is the most intimate affinity and experience that unites us with God, taking us into the secret place of the Most High and filling us with his holy breath and life.

The model prayer of our Lord shows what things we should pray for and gives us some insight into the relative importance of the things that we should desire,

2. The Field of the Christian Life

Having found the means of the Christian life the next point is, Where shall this life be lived? What is its field?

At once it plunges us into the field of temptation as illustrated in Lesson V.

This was the experience of Jesus himself.

No sooner did the voice from heaven die away than he heard a whisper from hell, and in our experience there may be violent changes in our spiritual weather and the purest thought or deed may be bordered and mixed with some evil suggestion.

The experience of Jesus in his temptation in the wilderness often wonderfully fits our experience in the way temptations come to us and in the way by which we can beat them back and conquer them.

The next field in which we are to apply the principles of the Christian life is in our use of our gifts as illustrated in Lesson VI.

The Christian life becomes very practical at this point and looks into our possessions and powers, our goods and bank account and pocket-

book, and requires us to devote all these to the service of our Lord. Though we all have differing gifts, yet we all have at least one talent, which is a large sum, and no one is so poor that he cannot render valuable service in the kingdom.

Our talents grow by use, for they are vital seeds and carry in their bosoms unbounded harvests.

The Christian life cannot be lived in idleness but calls for activity in useful service, and for this use of our gifts, a day of reckoning will surely call us to account.

The Christian life begins in the heart and then immediately radiates outward and expresses itself in the Christian home as illustrated in Lesson VII.

The home is the center of our social life and the seed-bed of the church and community and state.

Paul, bachelor as he was, appreciated the central importance of Christian home life and grows plain and pungent and practical in specific directions for its various members.

If we are not Christians in the home, we are not Christians anywhere.

The duties of wives to husbands and of husbands to wives, and of children to parents and of parents to children are set forth in terms that literally apply to our modern life.

The union of Christ and the church is a profound and beautiful illustration of the tie that should bind husband and wife together.

Out of the home into the church our expanding Christian life should go, and this is brought out in Lesson VIII.

The church is our organized way of living and spreading the Christian life, and without this means this life would wither and fail.

Church members should be the salt of the earth in their cleansing and healing presence and the light that disperses the shadows of ignorance and sin.

They should be marked by steadfastness in the faith, mutual helpfulness in bearing their burdens and especially should they be wise in winning souls.

A church is no stronger than its members, and every Christian should strive to live up to the level of his duty in the church. The weakness of Christianity is due to the weakness of its church members, and if all the members of even a small church could be filled and energized by the spirit that marked the small Pentecostal church it would be a mighty army in its community.

The slow percentage of growth of all Christian churches is due to the indifference and laxness of church members in seeking converts.

The church is not to be inclosed within its own walls, but now widens out its work into the community, as is set forth in Lesson IX.

It should be interested and active in the whole welfare of the community in its religion, morals, education, sanitation, amusements, industrial conditions, political administration, and all things that pertain to its health and holiness.

Temperance is one of these vital conditions, and work in this field has not been completed, now that prohibition has been written into the federal constitution and law.

There is danger that we may relax our temperance teaching and watchfulness as though it were no longer necessary, but we must still pay the price of liberty which is eternal vigilance.

At bottom the matter of temperance is self-control and especially the master of the flesh by the spirit.

If we will subordinate the flesh to the spirit even to the extent of crucifying the flesh, we shall be set free from its bondage and bitterness and emerge into the glorious liberty of the spirit in which we live, and yet not we, but Christ lives in us.

The logical completion of the Christian field is the world itself, as is shown in Lesson IX.

Christ was no local prophet, but a universal Teacher and Saviour of the world.

Christianity is a world religion, respecting no boundaries of continent or ocean, nation or race, but like the atmosphere diffuses itself everywhere and will give spiritual life to every human soul.

The scene on the mountain top where Jesus gave to the disciples his great commission is one of the great views and visions of the Bible, and we are now carrying out this grand program and command in all our Christian work and especially in foreign missions.

3. The Spirit of the Christian Life

The spirit of the Christian life is unselfish, sharing of its blessing as shown in Lesson X.

Telling good news is always a pleasant privilege and we should especially appreciate the duty of sharing the good news of the gospel.

We should not be too particular about the place where we are called upon to sow the good seed, for the most unpromising soil may bear unexpected harvests.

Philip went to a hard place when he went to Samaria, but he was able to stir that city with new life and great joy. He went to a still more unpromising place when he was sent down to Gaza in the desert, but there he found and won his most splendid convert.

To enjoy anything we must have the nature or spirit of it in us, and to enjoy sharing the good news we must have in us the spirit and love of Christ.

It is a delight to do what love constrains us to do, and when we, in any worthy degree, appreciate and experience Christ's love for us, we shall be new creatures delighting to do his will and work. The duty of spreading the gospel finally widens out to making the world Christian, as we see in Lesson XI.

Christ is no local prophet but a world Saviour and his great commission sends us out to the ends of the earth.

The spirit of the Christian life is one of eternal hope, as is taught in Lesson XII.

Man is the forward-looking creature, a power the animal does not have for "the present only toucheth it."

Our life today depends in no small degree on what we believe it will be tomorrow, and if we thought our life would end with today and vanish into nothingness, its interest and value would quickly be lowered to near the zero point.

All the world dreams of immortality, but Christ brought this great hope out of the twilight and shadows of dreamland into light and vital life.

He took the troubled thoughts and fears of his sorrowing disciples and transmuted them into triumphal chords which have lost none of their music with the lapse of the centuries.

Bodies we now have and must have hereafter, but they will be spiritual bodies transfigured into forms beyond our utmost dreams.

In the light of this great hope which irradiates all our Christian faith and life, we should take courage and abound in the work of the Lord.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the relation of means to ends and what is the objective of the Christian life?

2. Describe the widening fields of the Christian life in their logical order and relation.

3. How can we make these studies in the Christian life result in the Christian way of living in our day?

4. Why is the Bible such a modern book in its principles and applications?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND QUARTER

Peter is the most picturesque character, the most sharply marked individuality among the disciples.

He is a burning torch of fervency and zeal, always ready to take fire and rush ahead, though it may be rashly.

Yet his strength was mixed with weakness and his impulsiveness often led him to a fall.

In a way he is the most likeable of the disciples as he is the most human and probably we can understand him because we can see ourselves in him better than in the others.

Jesus loved him too and took him into the inner circle of his disciples.

In these lessons we follow him from the shore of Galilee where he became a convert and disciple through his checkered career until he disappears, leaving us two letters from his own hand.

His conversion was normal in that he changed his mind and threw all the currents of his life into the channel of Christ's will and work.

He went with Jesus through the great scenes and crises of his life, and was present when he preached in the synagogue and ministered in the home, in a storm at sea, in the solitude of the north where he was taken into the inner confidence and secret of Jesus, up on the Mount of Transfiguration where he saw his Master clothed in splendor, at the trial of his Lord in which he denied him shamefully, at the empty tomb of the risen Christ, at Pentecost preaching a powerful sermon, on the Temple steps healing a lame beggar, and we see him passing through the fires of persecution and repeatedly going to jail, experiencing his epochal conversion and reversal of his life in his relations to the Gentiles, opening the door to them in baptism, and finally we read a passage from one of his letters full of practical wisdom.

It is a stirring story and we do well to study it so as to catch some of his spirit and follow him as he followed Christ.

SECOND QUARTER

The Life and Letters of Peter

Aim: To discover, through a study of his Life and Letters, the contribution of Peter to Christian belief about Jesus, and how this belief should influence our lives.

LESSON I—APRIL 3

Peter Becomes a Disciple of Jesus

Lesson: Mark 1:14-18, 29-31

Golden Text: Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. MARK 1:17

Devotional Reading: Psalm 91:1-10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Making the Great Decision.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Answering Christ's Call.

Lesson Text: Mark 1:14-18, 29-31

14 Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel.

16 And passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishers.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they left their nets, and followed him.

29 And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell him of her:

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Repentance.*
2. *The Kingdom at Hand.*
3. *Fishers of Men.*

4. In the Synagogue.
5. In the Home.

We can follow Peter only as he followed Christ, and it is well to begin these studies of the life and letters of Peter by seeing how he became a disciple of Jesus.

He had to become acquainted with Jesus before he could contribute anything to the Christian belief about Jesus.

Always must we get before we can give, and only as we first go to Jesus and receive his life and spirit can we impart unto others the same blessing.

Our lesson opens in Galilee where Jesus arrived at the beginning of the second year of his ministry.

1. Repentance

Jesus began preaching in Galilee calling to men, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." The word here translated "repent" literally means "change your mind."

It is an intellectual perception and conviction and act by which the whole current of the mind is turned into a new channel.

Treadwell Walden has a small book on this word in which he explains its meaning as the "spiritual perception of the right and the true which grows within and around a mind that is being gradually educated up to the divine standard; the nature wide open in front, not only looking behind, and receiving the whole counsel of God, not a part of it: every faculty enlightened, every feeling inspired; the entire man engaged; conviction, not excitement; earnestness, not impulse; habitude, not paroxysm; the heart tempered by the understanding, the understanding warmed by the heart . . . the all-encompassing grandeur of an announcement which takes in the whole life, and calls upon man to enlarge his consciousness with the eternal and the spiritual, to live on the scale of another life, to let his character grow under this great knowledge, to let his conduct fall into the lines of the revealed divine will."

This shows what a broad and deep change of mind it is, going down to the springs of personality and turning all its currents into the new life.

This is a voluntary act which lies within our own power, and this is the step by which we turn to follow Christ and enter the Christian life.

This is the initial call of the gospel.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, saying, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; when Jesus began preaching, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel"; and when Peter climaxed and closed his sermon on the day of Pentecost with the call, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ," each of these preachers called out to his hearers, "Change your minds."

Change your mind! This is the cry that rings through the New Testament from beginning to end; and it is to this day the initial word and call of the gospel.

Conversion is an act and movement of the whole soul out of sin into righteousness.

At the opening of the Universal Conference on Christian Life and Work at Stockholm in August, 1925, the Lord Bishop of Winchester preached a notable sermon on the text "Repent ye," and began it with these striking words:

"Change your mind. Adopt a new outlook. Get a fresh point of view. That was Christ's challenge to his own generation. That is the challenge which in his name we make today to the men and women of these modern days. To accept that challenge is life. To reject it is death."

2. *The Kingdom at Hand*

This change of mind, however, is not a sheer blind act of the will, but a rational process.

It is under our control through our control of our ideas and motives.

The general means by which this is brought about is the creation of a new interest, a changed view and vision of life, the introduction into the mind and heart of a more powerful motive, or, in Dr. Chalmers' famous phrase, "the expulsive power of a new affection."

"A great and priceless thing," says Mark Twain in one of the fine serious passages scattered through his books, "is a new interest! How it takes possession of a man! how it clings to him, how it rides him! I strode onward from Schwarenbach hostelry a changed man, a transformed personality. I walked in a new world, I saw with new eyes. I had been looking aloft at the giant snow-peaks only as things to be worshipped for their grandeur and magnitude, and their unspeakable grace and form; I looked up at them now, as also things to be conquered and climbed."

This was the transforming effect upon him of the Alps when he saw them in a new light as a challenge to his will to stand triumphant on their summits.

What motive did Jesus offer, what mountain summit did he present to his hearers as a sufficient reason and incentive to change their minds? "The kingdom of God!"

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Here is a mountain peak overtopping all the Alps, an achievement great and grand, mighty and majestic enough to arouse our whole personality to its highest aspiration and power.

The kingdom of God is an idea and ideal that should capture all our faculties of mind and heart.

It should wake up our dormant powers, renew our fatigued senses, dispel any gloom and discouragement and pessimism that have been hanging around our spirits, reorganize our whole personality and lift our life to a new level.

Many a life that has been worn out and lost all hope has blazed up into an intense fire of ambition and energy and enthusiasm when a mountain of high endeavor that has long been in view but made no appeal takes on new meaning and power, and the soul views it with searching gaze and is absorbed in its wonders and resolves to conquer its heights.

Conversion is such a change.

The soul can be lured from sin only as it is drawn by some more powerful attraction. Sin can be driven out of the heart only as it is crowded out by some stronger good. We can persuade men to leave the old life only as we offer them better life.

Christ does this very thing when he makes to us this appeal, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

3. Fishers of Men

We see this call having its proper effect upon Peter as he with his brother was fishing in the sea. "And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men. And straightway they left the nets, and followed him."

The point of the command was that the same powers and skill they had been using in catching fish were now to be used in catching men.

Their whole life on that lake was a true preparation for their ministry in preaching the gospel, and this principle applies to every convert. The same powers of body and mind and heart, the same mental discipline in reasoning and forming sound judgments, the same insight into human nature and ability to persuade men that have made a man successful in any line of business can now be turned into the business of serving Christ and winning converts to him.

The fisherman's skill is especially applicable to soul winning.

The fisherman is an educated man in his line. He knows fish, their habitat and habits, their appetite and favorite food. He knows the seasons and signs of the weather, when to approach fish and when to leave them alone, and how to bait his hook and drop it temptingly before them; and especially, when a fish has taken the bait, how to manipulate it so as to keep it on the hook and when to let the line out and when to draw it in, and how to tire the fish out and finally to get it into his net.

Fishing is a fine art and calls for a high degree of skill.
Soul winning is equally an art and calls for tact.

If one with the best of intentions goes at unconverted people in an abrupt and blundering way, he may easily scare them off, or if he offers them the wrong kind of arguments, he may offend or fail to appeal to their sense of judgment and truth.

Jesus conveyed the same instruction when he admonished his disciples as he was sending them out on a mission, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

The teacher and minister and every one who would win others to Christ needs to study this art and know how to approach them at the psychological moment and appeal to them with such methods and in such a spirit as will disarm opposition and lure them into the gospel net.

Note the more correct reading of Proverbs 11:30: "He that is wise winneth souls."

4. In the Synagogue

"And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue." Then Jesus with his disciples were in the synagogue on this Sabbath day, where he not only taught, but also cast out evil spirits so that the people exclaimed, "What is this? a new teaching!"

His gospel was not a finespun theory or sentimental speculation remote from practical affairs and human needs, as preaching sometimes is, but it was the sword of the Spirit that smote sin and sent incorrigible spirits of evil cringing and screaming back into the infinite darkness whence they came.

The gospel must be, not only preached, but also applied.
We must get rid of the notion that sitting in the synagogue is religion.
Worship must make war on wickedness.

It is the business of the church and of Christians to cast out uncleanness and not let one evil spirit alone. A church that does not stir up evil spirits, much less cast them out, has lost its divine commission and is an impertinence among men.

We should not fear but welcome "new teaching" that has power to cast out unclean spirits. Thus Jesus spent the morning in the church.

5. In the Home

What did he do next? "And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John." Out of the church into the home.

And what did Jesus do there? Just the same kind of work he did in the synagogue: he healed Simon's wife's mother of a fever; he blessed that home.

There is a close connection between the church and the home.

However many miles may lie between them, they touch each other in their inner spirit. What we are in the one, we are in the other. Worship cannot be shut up in the church, but must go out with us.

Religion is preached in the church, but it must be practiced everywhere and especially in the home.

The close of worship is the beginning of work. If we get any good in the church, it ought to show itself speedily in the home. Some sick one should be ministered to with a kindlier hand, more patience and gentleness should mark our behaviour, beautiful courtesies be more abundant, new Christian graces should bloom out in our lives.

The home should be brighter and sweeter on Monday morning and through all the week because we have worshipped on the Sabbath in the church.

So Peter became a disciple of Jesus in steps which we may follow.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we go about the matter of changing our minds?
2. Why is the kingdom of God the greatest of all motives for becoming disciples of Jesus?
3. Can the skill of the farmer or of any other occupation be turned to service in winning souls?
4. Why do we go to church?
5. How can we be Christians in the home?

LESSON II—APRIL 10

Peter's Lesson in Trust

Lesson: Matthew 14:22-33

Golden Text: Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. MATTHEW 14:27.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 91:1-10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why Peter Failed.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christ the Ever-present Helper.

Lesson Text: Matthew 16:22-33

22 And straightway he constrained the disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side, till he should send the multitudes away.

23 And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone.

24 But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came unto them walking upon the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters.

29 And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters to come to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were gone up into the boat, the wind ceased.

33 And they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Boat in a Storm.***
2. ***An Ever-present Helper.***
3. ***Affrighted Disciples.***
4. ***Peter's Infirm Faith.***
5. ***A Calm Sea.***

Jesus had just fed the five thousand and so moved were they by the miracle that they thought of making him king by force—an impossible way of crowning him.

Perceiving this, he sent them away and thus nipped the absurd thought in the bud.

He also started the disciples across the lake in a boat and then went up into the mountain to pray and was there alone. He thus escaped from the madding crowd into the mountain solitude that up in the silence of that starry height he might hold communion with his Father and deepen and enrich his spiritual life.

The multitude and the mountain, society and solitude, work and worship should be the complementary parts of our life that blend into a harmonious whole.

Thus Jesus separated himself from his disciples and sent them out upon the sea alone. It was not good for him and for them that they should always be together.

He needed meditation and prayer, and they needed discipline and self-reliance, and both these ends were promoted when he went up into the mountain and sent them out to sea.

1. The Boat in a Storm

While Jesus was praying up in the mountain, what was happening out upon the sea? "The boat was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves; for the wind was contrary."

The sea of Galilee, sunk six hundred feet below the ocean and rimmed around the mountains, is a hot pit into which the cold winds rush down from the summits, often with startling suddenness, and lash it into a mass of foam.

The wind was now beating down upon the boat containing the disciples, so that it was distressed or "tortured," as the word means, by the waves.

They doubtless set sail that afternoon on a smooth and smiling sea that shimmered before them under the setting sun and promised an easy and pleasant voyage; but contrary winds soon arose and whipped

the sea into angry waves that were now distressing and endangering them.

Life has often been compared to a voyage and no truer picture can be suggested.

Our ship may sail for a time over a placid sea upon which an unshaded sun pours its full splendor, and the voyage promises to be one of unbroken prosperity and pleasure.

But up around the cold summits of the world are lurking winds that are gathering energy and biding their time. Sooner or later they will let loose their fury and sweep down upon the sea of life and whip it until it leaps and writhes and foams in its agony. Then our boat is beaten upon and tortured and we are in the midst of great peril that threatens to sink us or dash our wreckage against the rocky shore.

Perplexity, anxiety, temptation, loss, sorrow, are so many contrary winds.

They arise to hinder our passage to every port, they distress every boat, they imperil every voyager.

Yet winds are not lawless forces blindly bent on destruction, but are obedient agents that move in the grooves of natural law and work out beneficent ends.

However fiercely the storms may lash our life's sea, they never slip from our Father's hand.

2. An Ever-present Helper

The disciples may have thought it strange that the Master would send them out upon that stormy sea to battle with its waves alone. Secure in his mountain retreat, was he unmindful of the effect of the storm on his disciples in their boat down on the lake?

Such thoughts may have troubled the disciples, as they trouble us at times.

But how was it on this occasion? Jesus, "seeing them distressed in rowing" (Mark 6:48), knew all about their condition. From his mountain height he could look right down upon his disciples in their storm-tossed boat.

He had not forgotten them, but was watching them with a wary and loving eye.

God can see through the storm, and no blackness of darkness ever hides us from his sight.

In the darkest night or most furious tempest "standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

Jesus not only saw his disciples, but he also went to them, walking upon the sea. The watery waste that threatened to engulf his disciples was as a solid floor under his feet to give access to them.

We may be where no human feet could come to us, but God can always reach us.

The obstruction that would shut men away from us becomes the path along which God can approach us. In such a time "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Jesus did not simply sympathize with his disciples, but he also gave them substantial help; he did not simply pity them in the storm, but he stretched forth to them his powerful hand.

It is a great thing that Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but it is a still greater thing that this feeling takes the form of practical help.

From his throne on high he saw us tossed about and tortured in the storm of sin and sorrow, and he came into the world and assumed our nature that he might give us his hand and save us.

3. Affrighted Disciples

How did the coming of Jesus on the water affect the disciples?

At first it only increased their fear.

They thought that he was "a ghost," some fearsome specter of the sea, a thing that so easily terrorized superstitious sailors; "and they cried out for fear."

These big burly fishermen were scared out of their wits and cried out like children frightened in the dark.

And what were they alarmed at? At Jesus, their Master, coming to their help.

Their fear was all a mistake, the baseless creation of their own imagination, and they were terrified at their best Friend.

Is it not so sometimes with us?

God comes to us in various forms in his providence, and sometimes we mistake him for an enemy.

He draws near to help us amidst the waves of the tempest, and we think he is a ghost.

We must yet learn that "behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face." The fearful specter that our distrustful imagination spies in the storm may verily be the face of our Father.

If we only had the faith to believe and the wisdom to see, we would know that many of the things that alarm us in this world are our truest friends.

How did Jesus treat the fear of his disciples? He immediately called to them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." How often did God, in introducing the gospel into the world, have to assure men that he was coming to do them no harm? "Fear not," said the angel to Zacharias; "Fear not," said the angel to Mary; "Be not afraid," sang the angel to the shepherds; "Be not afraid," said Jesus to the disciples in the storm; "Fear not," said the angel to the women at the empty tomb of Christ.

God is coming to do us no harm; he is no ghostly specter, but the Father of our spirits whose heart is love.

We need not be afraid of Jesus Christ: he is the Son of God and our Brother who comes to give us a helping hand on the stormy sea of life.

His coming should dissipate our fears and fill us with peace and joy. However the storm may rage around us, through its roar and confusion we may hear a clear calm voice, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

4. Peter's Infirm Faith

Peter now did a characteristic thing.

From one extreme of fear he rushed to the other extreme of rash courage.

He answered Jesus, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters."

We are not told his motive and purpose in this request, but knowing his nature we can hit upon his mind with tolerable accuracy. This desire was the impulsive outrush of his heart towards Christ, overleaping the ordinary bounds of necessity and propriety, not unmingled with self-confidence and conceit, ambitious to surpass other disciples and show them what he could do.

There is such a thing as going too fast and too far in the right direction, and even faith and devotion should be tempered with discretion and humility.

Jesus gave Peter a chance to try his faith and said unto him, "Come." Peter stepped down upon the water and started towards Jesus.

As long as he looked unto Jesus the water bore him up like a pavement under his feet.

But presently Peter's attention was distracted by the wind, and then he was alarmed and cried out, "Lord, save me."

He stood upon the water and then was afraid of the wind!

His faith lost its grip, his self-confidence deserted him, and then he fell from his rash faith into cowardly fear.

Jesus immediately reached forth his hand and caught him and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Was not this the lesson Jesus was teaching all these disciples in the storm?

For this purpose he sent them out in that boat into the storm that they might learn to trust him more.

The deepest lesson that we can learn in any storm is that God is in it, and there is not a gust of its wind or a drop of its spray that is not fulfilling his will.

All its winds and waves and lightning flashes and thunder peals are working together for good to them that love him, though they may be overwhelmed and smothered under its billows. More faith in him we need, and then we shall not doubt or fear.

5. A Calm Sea

Jesus now stepped into the boat with his disciples and then the wind ceased.

His invisible hand was laid upon the secret mechanism of that storm and it suddenly stopped still, the winds were hushed, the waves fell flat, the sea no longer tossed the boat or fretted the shore, and there was a great calm.

The presence of Jesus in our boat is the secret of peace in a storm.

We may be "amid the howling wintry sea," but "we are in port if we have thee."

Our ship may be in the storm, but the storm will not be in our ship.

The mind of Christ within us will cast out doubt and fear and fill us with faith and the peace of God.

"And they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

They believed in Jesus before, but this was a new and more astonishing exhibition of his power.

His wide grasp on the elements of nature, showing that he held the very globe in his hand, convinced them more profoundly of his divinity and drew from them more loyal and loving worship.

The way Jesus Christ has laid his hand upon this world and is rebuking stormy seas of sin and shaping it into righteousness should compel and confirm our faith in him as a Master of more than human power.

And when we receive him into our hearts and experience the peace and joy of his presence, we can truly worship him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the physical features of lake Galilee.
2. To what extent has the sea lost its terrors in our day?
3. Is our control of the sea in any degree due to God's help?
4. Is the faith cure, when neglecting medical means, an instance of rash faith?
5. Why did Peter's faith fail?

LESSON III—APRIL 17

Peter's Great Confession

Lesson: Matthew 16:13-24

Golden Text: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. MATTHEW 16:16.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 34:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Confessing Christ Openly.

Topic for Young People and Adults: What Think Ye of Christ?

Lesson Text: Matthew 16:13-24

13 Now when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?

14 And they said, Some *say* John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

21 From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

22 And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A Critical Question.*
2. *A Great Answer.*
3. *A Crowning Blessing.*

4. A Fateful Shadow.
5. A Bad Blunder.

This scene occurred near the end of the second year of the ministry of Jesus, which was chiefly spent in Galilee.

Opposition was now increasing and the end was looming into view.

Jesus was closing his work in Galilee and was about to go back to Judea to complete his mission amidst the shadows and storm of Calvary and the sunburst and glory of the resurrection and ascension.

At this critical juncture he wanted to make sure of his disciples that they were bound to him with cords of faith and love that would stand the strain of the coming days of trial and never break.

He led them northward to Cæsarea Philippi to make a momentous revelation to them and have a final understanding with them.

1. A Critical Question

When they were far from the busy scenes in which they had been moving, Jesus put to his disciples the question, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"

This question is still throbbing in the heart of our civilization.

First asked by an obscure Galilean in that far-off solitude, it has come thundering down the ages and is the mightiest question in the world today.

Ideas rule life and in the long run sway the world.

What men think determines what they are and do. The theories that are generally held with reference to government, industry, wealth, art, morals and religion, mold human society into all its forms, as the hidden life of the tree shapes every leaf and bud.

What men think of Christ is a master force in the world and profoundly determines its life.

Find a city or community or country in which nobody has any respect and reverence for Christ and that would not be a safe or fit place in which to live.

The disciples gave the answers that men were then giving.

The answers were various, but they all agreed in viewing Jesus as an extraordinary character, at least a prophet, a mysterious personality containing an element of the supernatural.

Men are still giving various answers to this question, but they all take high ground with reference to his character and work.

The answer that Jesus was a myth, or a dupe, or an imposter, is no longer tolerated in intelligent circles. Even the greatest sceptics see something in this man that they cannot explain on ordinary principles, and many of them have paid tributes to him that fall little short of divinity.

"Religion," wrote the agnostic John Stuart Mill, "cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor, even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than the endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life."

Charles Lamb once said to a company of friends: "If Shakespeare should enter the room, we should all rise; if Jesus Christ should enter, everyone would kneel."

How close such confessions come to acknowledging the very deity of Jesus Christ.

The general mind of the world feels that Jesus is a prophet in whose personality and power there is something supernatural.

Jesus now turned the general question into the pointed personal inquiry, "But who say ye that I am?"

This was the end he was aiming at and coming to, for just then the important thing was, not what men in general thought, but what these disciples thought, of Jesus, for their thoughts were in no small measure to determine the thought of the Christian world.

Important as is the general question, far more important to us each one is this individual inquiry. No one can escape its sharp personal point. A neutral answer is impossible.

Whatever we say or do is a decision; and nothing else goes so deep down and so far out into our lives as who we say Jesus is.

2. A Great Answer

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," exclaimed the impulsive fervent Peter.

This thought did not then come into Peter's mind for the first time: it had been growing there a long while; the evidence for it had been accumulating; experience had been confirming it; but now for the first time it flashed upon him in the full depth and intensity of its meaning and leaped into clear masterful expression.

It is a great confession from every point of view.

It grasps Christ as the Messiah, the fulfilment and perfect blossom of the old dispensation. The Jews were blinded by their pride at this point and refused to see in the humble Nazarene the Messiah of God, but Peter and the disciples in the midst of the prevailing unbelief and prejudice had insight and faith to see and say this truth.

The confession is great in that it exalts Christ as the Son of the living God, lifting him above humanity and crowning him with divinity.

This is the heart of the Christian faith.

It is the deity of Jesus that gives value and power to his mission and work. Deny him this crown and he is reduced to the level of our humanity, and the world is left without a redeemer that is mighty to save.

Why did Jesus ask the disciples this question?

Did he not know what they thought of him? Yes, but he wanted to draw out their faith into full confession and thereby strengthen it.

Our beliefs grow deeper and more definite and vivid when they are expressed.

Public confession is especially potent in giving depth and stability and power to our beliefs. A real conviction can hardly be kept shut up in the mind: give it an outlet in expression and it mounts into mastery.

This is a fundamental psychological reason for confessing our faith before men.

3. A Crowning Blessing

The great answer was instantly crowned with a great blessing. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah."

Faith in the Son of God is the root of all spiritual blessing, and every duty instantly brings its own reward.

This blessing had several elements. It was rooted back in the revelation of the Father. It did not spring up out of flesh and blood, but came down from above. Faith in Christ is a rational process according to the ordinary working of our minds, but deeper than our reason there is also the presence of the Father through his immanent Holy Spirit revealing the truth unto us.

No one can come unto the Son except the Father draw him.

God's love is older than ours, and at every step in redemption he goes before and is ahead of us.

The next blessing for Peter was that he should be a foundation stone in Christ's church. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

Few passages of Scripture have been the subject of so much controversy as this. The two main interpretations are, first, that the rock on which Christ will build his church is Peter himself, and, second, that this rock is the faith he has just confessed.

The two views may be combined into the view that it is Peter as making this confession that is the foundation rock of the church.

The Rock of Ages and chief cornerstone on which the church is built is Christ himself, but on this Rock is laid the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20).

All believers are built into Christ's spiritual house as living stones (I Peter 2:5) and are thus foundation for those that come after them and build on them.

Peter not only had the blessing of his faith in his own soul, but he had the farther privilege of imparting it to others. He started the walls of Christ's kingdom in the world, and this was a joy in itself.

His work underlies our work and helps to bear us up today. We in turn enjoy the same privilege.

In so far as we are built on Christ and impart our faith unto others, we are living stones in the walls of the kingdom and foundation for those above us.

The same general explanation applies to the keys that were given to Peter.

Keys are symbols of authority and power.

The supreme authority in the church is Christ himself (Rev. 3:7), but he delegates authority to apostles and ministers.

There must be government in the church, or it would fall into inefficiency and confusion, and ministers and other officers are authorized to rule over its affairs, preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, admit members, and exercise discipline.

4. A Fateful Shadow

And now across the path of the disciples for the first time fell the fateful shadow of the cross.

From that time began Jesus to part the veil of the future before them and show them things to come.

He saw his path running straight up to Jerusalem into the murderous hatred of the priests and Pharisees; beyond their hatred he saw the terrible cross standing with its arms outstretched to clasp and crush him in their bloody embrace in an agony of death; and beyond the cross he saw the splendor and power of the resurrection morning.

This had been hidden from the disciples, but Jesus had been bearing this momentous secret all along.

The Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world, and before man sinned or ever the mountains were brought forth, the Son gave himself to the work of redemption.

Jesus had spared his disciples this painful disclosure until they were able to bear it, and God often hides things from us in mercy and reveals them to us only as we are ready for them and can stand the strain.

5. A Bad Blunder

Impetuous Peter could not stand this disclosure and broke out in the exclamation, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee."

This was just like Peter, unloosing his self-restraint and speaking unwisely with his tongue.

Having been the first to cheer the heart of Jesus with his noble confession, he was now the first to sadden him with a bad blunder. He began to rebuke Jesus for thinking he would be killed and declared it should never happen.

The plan of redemption unfolded by Jesus running back through eternity, was not to Peter's liking and he proposed to stop it! How true is this to Peter's short-sighted vision and impulsive nature.

But Jesus made short work with Peter's presumption. He unmasked him as the agent of Satan and bade him from his presence; he showed him up as a stumbling-block in the way; and he exposed the root of his folly in a wordly mind.

Never had such withering words from the lips of the Master fallen upon poor Peter; but he richly deserved the reproof.

This is what comes of our attempting to hinder God's ways and to put finishing touches on his plan.

We frequently slide down into wordly views and utter foolish speeches. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and the quicker we drop ours and take his, the better it will be for us.

The way of the world is not the way of Christ.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Did Jesus have any natural curiosity to know what men were saying about him?
2. Is the person of Jesus looming upon the world in larger significance in our day?
3. In what sense are believers today foundation stones in the church and kingdom of God?
4. In what ways may we repeat Peter's blunder?
5. How can we take up the cross and follow Jesus?

LESSON IV—APRIL 24

Peter at the Transfiguration

Lesson: Mark 9:2-10; II Peter 1:16-18

Golden Text: There came a voice out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son: hear ye him. MARK 9:7.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Peter Saw and Heard in the Mount.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Majesty and Glory of Christ.

Lesson Text: Mark 9:2-10; II Peter 1:16-18

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter and James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them;

3 And his garments became glistering, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them.

4 And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5 And Peter answereth and saith to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

6 For he knew not what to answer; for they became sore afraid.

7 And there came a cloud overshadowing them: and there came a voice out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son: hear ye him.

8 And suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

9 And as they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of man should have risen again from the dead.

10 And they kept the saying, questioning among themselves what the rising again from the dead should mean.

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:

18 And this voice we *ourselves* heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Transfigured Jesus.

2. Heavenly Visitors.
3. A Mistaken Desire.
4. The Cloud and the Voice.
5. Tell No Man.
6. Eyewitnesses.

The unexpected and startling announcement of Jesus to his disciples at Cæsarea Philippi of his coming crucifixion must have shrouded them in gloom: it seemed the utter disappointment and destruction of all their hopes.

They needed a glimpse of the divinity that was hidden in Jesus and of the glory that lay beyond the cross to disperse the darkness and sustain and inspire them.

Possibly also Jesus himself, as he drew near his passion, needed a fresh assurance of the Father's presence and love.

The transfiguration met this need for both disciple and Master. It was a revelation of the power and glory that the cross could not crush. It shot its splendor through the gloom and kindled despondent faith and hope into new strength and joy.

1. The Transfigured Jesus

The transfiguration is a mountain scene and ranks with Sinai, and Calvary among the loftiest summits of sacred story.

Jesus with Peter and James and John, his most intimate and trusted disciples, climbed the mountain slope to a place of prayer.

It was night, and Jesus engaged in communion with the Father.

Presently the disciples were aware that a mysterious change was being wrought in the dim and dusky figure of the Master. His face began to shine and his clothing emitted gleams and sparkles of light. The strange luminosity grew into effulgence until his countenance was radiant and his raiment dazzling white.

His whole person seemed steeped in splendor, a glory from within was streaming through the veil of his flesh.

There is a mystery here whose border we may not cross. There

were divine possibilities in Jesus of which this transfiguration gives us a hint and glimpse.

It would seem that his divinity was hidden by the veil of his humanity and that for a moment its glory was kindled and burned through.

In a weaker degree Moses was transfigured when, after his forty days of communion with God on Sinai, his face shone; and they that looked on Stephen at his trial "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Thus even the human spirit, when intensely kindled, shines through the flesh and in a degree transfigures it.

Of Daniel Webster it is recorded that, for several hours after he had delivered his great oration at Bunker Hill, his face wore an indescribably grand expression and awed those who came into his presence.

Character carves the countenance.

Sydney Smith said of Francis Horner that the Ten Commandments were written on his face. "Human physiognomy," says Victor Hugo, "is formed by the conscience and the life, and is the result of a multitude of mysterious excavations."

Some have become so sanctified by the Holy Spirit that they wear a heavenly aspect and are verily transfigured into the likeness of Christ.

It was as he prayed that Jesus was transfigured, and it was after forty days of communion with Jehovah that the face of Moses shone.

Prayer kindles the soul into intense consciousness of God, and it is then that the glory of holiness shines through.

2. *Heavenly Visitors*

Two visitors from the heavenly world now appeared upon the scene. Moses and Elijah, themselves shining with glory, talked with Jesus.

Few facts in the gospel story are so deeply and richly significant.

Moses, representing the law, and Elijah, representing the prophets, are here associated with Jesus, the Messiah whom they foretold and prepared the way for, thus binding the old and the new dispensations together into unity.

Redemption is the same principle and process through all ages and forms one plan.

Immortality is here brought to light.

These are travelers returned from the other world. Many centuries before, they quitted the habitation of earth, yet here they are alive.

Death does not end all.

They also had transfigured bodies, prophetic of the resurrection body.

They were recognized as Moses and Elijah, thus illustrating the fact of heavenly recognition.

We shall know each other there,

They were in possession of the same human faculties that they had in this life. Death and heaven do not change the essential constitution and individuality of the soul.

The redeemed spirit is purified and glorified, but it is the same personality.

They talked with Jesus, showing that the redeemed are still interested in the affairs of earth. And what was the subject of their conversation? "His decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke).

Redemption is still the subject of greatest interest in heaven, and its point of intensest glory is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

If the heavenly inhabitants are so interested in this redeeming sacrifice, God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

3. A Mistaken Desire

As the visitors were departing, impulsive Peter spoke up in a bewildered state of mind, saying, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here:

and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

It was good for the disciples to be there.

This revelation of the hidden power and glory of Jesus must have scattered their doubts and wonderfully revived and strengthened their faith. It threw the gate of heaven ajar and gave them a glimpse of the glory within. Such a Master they could trust and worship.

It is good for us that these disciples were eyewitnesses of this event.

Their record has on it inimitable marks of truthfulness, and the transfiguration is proof of the divinity of Jesus and of immortality.

Yet blessed as was this experience, Peter was mistaken in his desire and proposal to protract it.

Jesus had other work to do than to enjoy his glory and the heavenly visitors could not tarry long on earth. The Mount of Transfiguration is not a place to dwell: too much work is waiting for us on the plain below.

It is good for us to climb the mount of meditation and prayer and see the face of God and be transfigured before him, but we should not stay there too long.

Religious rapture should not become a luxury that causes us to forget the great world lying in sin and want.

Prayerful meditation on the mount must be combined with active mercy on the plain to form the full-orbed Christian life.

4. The Cloud and the Voice

A cloud now overshadowed them and a voice came out of the clouds saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him."

The cloud was a symbol of God's presence, but one that hid him from view. The voice was the voice of God, setting his seal upon Jesus as his Son and directing faith, obedience and love to him.

The cloud shut the mystery and intolerable splendor of the Father's face out of sight, but the voice brought him near and declared his will.

The cloud concealed and the voice revealed.

This is the method of God in all his ways. He always hides much from us and yet lets us know enough to do his will.

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.

The ultimate nature of the world, of life, of the simplest and most familiar thing, is enveloped in a cloud. We cannot go far in our search into these things until we are lost in a maze of mystery. And God, the Infinite and Eternal, who inhabiteth immensity and jewels his garments with burning suns, who by searching can find him out? "Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of him!"

So God walks through the world trailing clouds of glory.
Yet this cloud does not envelop in doubt our duty.

There is an infinite stretch of mystery which we cannot see, but there is always next to us an edge which we can see and which lets us know what we are to do: there is a cloud, but also out of this cloud comes a voice.

Jesus is the full revelation of God: he that hath seen him hath seen the Father.
He has authority to speak in the name of God: hear him.

Hear him as he speaks of sin and forgiveness: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Hear him as he speaks of the way of life: "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Hear him as he speaks of trouble: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."

Hear him as he speaks of death: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live."

Hear him as he speaks of heaven: "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you."

Hear him, and shadows will lift from your path and you will find the way of life.

Thus the disciples were strengthened and guided and the Master himself was made strong and calm to bear his cross.

5. *Tell No Man*

The voice died away in the silence, the cloud melted into the invisible, and Jesus was found alone.

The transfiguration glory had faded from his person and he was his ordinary self.

Moses and Elijah had vanished into the unseen world whence they came. The affrighted disciples were bidden to arise. Life resumed its ordinary course. The vision splendid had faded into the light of common day.

Intense ecstatic experiences cannot long continue.

Nerves would snap and the brain break down.

We cannot always live on the mountain top.

Peter thought to retain Moses and Elijah, but they were no longer needed and were permitted to depart.

Jesus only is enough for us.

The disciples were charged by the Master to "tell no man what things they had seen."

They were not to boast of their experience and go around blabbing it out.

Some things we should not tell. What we have seen in the secret place of the Most High is not to be made a matter of public display and foolish speech.

If we have been with God in the mount, we need not tell others: they will find it out.

Climb the mount of prayer and communion until you are transfigured before God: then come down into the world and say nothing about it, but get to work and heal some troubled soul.

6. Eyewitnesses

Peter never forgot this vision on the mount which burned itself into the very texture of his mind and heart.

Long afterwards in writing his Second Epistle he revived the memory of it in all its vividness and meaning, assuring his readers that the disciples "did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the coming and power of our Lord, Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

The very words came back to him which came out of the cloud "when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory."

This whole gospel history was not enacted in a corner, but in the fullest publicity in the presence of men of sound judgment and good conscience who acted as eyewitnesses and solemnly certified to us that these things are true.

We thank God for such witnesses and commit our souls to their sure word of testimony.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Where was the Mount of Transfiguration?
2. What power does the mind have over the body?
3. Why do not Moses and Elijah visit us?
4. Why does God conceal things from us?
5. Why should we not tell too much about our religious experience?

LESSON V—MAY 1

Peter's Denial and Repentance

Lesson: Mark 14:53-54, 66-71; Luke 22:61-62

Golden Text: Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. I CORINTHIANS 10:12.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 51:1-9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Jesus is Denied Today.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Danger of Sudden Temptations.

Lesson Text: Mark 14:53-54, 66-71; Luke 22:61-62

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

54 And Peter had followed him afar off, even within, into the court of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light *of the fire.*

66 And as Peter was beneath in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest;

67 And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, *even* Jesus.

68 But he denied, saying, I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest: and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

69 And the maid saw him, and began again to say to them that stood by, This is *one* of them.

70 But he again denied it. And after a little while again they that stood by said to Peter, Of a truth thou are *one* of them; for thou are a Galilean.

71 But he began to curse, and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And he went out, and wept bitterly.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Priests.***
2. ***Peter Following Afar Off.***
3. ***Peter Warming Himself at the Fire.***
4. ***Peter's Denial of Jesus.***
5. ***How Jesus Looked on Peter.***
6. ***Peter's Repentance.***

This is the most celebrated trial in the history of the world.

The light of the intensest publicity beats around it and all the characters in it stand out in the sharpest individuality.

Caiaphas the high priest and the members of the Sanhedrin, the ministers of religion and the doctors of divinity, Pilate, the shifty Roman politician, the hiding disciples, the city rabble, seeking blood with savage fierceness, the Roman soldiers in their brass helmets and scarlet cloaks, and amidst it all Jesus himself, standing calm and serene like a white tower in a black storm—upon them all falls the pitiless light which vividly depicts their character and conduct.

And the trial is not ended. It is still going on.

We now stand in its light and enact our parts and record our verdict for or against the same Jesus.

Peter plays a special part in the trial and our lesson throws its spotlight on him and gives us a close-up view of him.

1. The Priests

When he was arrested at Gethsemane, Jesus was taken before the priests assembled as the Sanhedrin, the chief court of the Jews, where he was examined.

We are struck throughout the trial with the calm unconcern of Jesus.

He was on trial for his life, he knew that sentence against him would result in awful death, and yet he took scarcely any measure to defend himself.

When other men would have been burdened with anxiety and voluble with explanations, he was perfectly serene and had nothing to say.

Doubtless one reason was that he knew how useless it would be to present any defense before a court that was already committed against him.

But a further reason for his silence and lack of concern was his sense of his absolute innocence.

His white soul knew that he had nothing to fear from anything that hate or hell could do.

The pure gold does not fear the fire, the polished diamond does not shrink from the light.

Innocence does not need to grow excited and frantic under charges, and often its best defense is to stand on its record and let enemies do the talking.

In the trial that Christ is still undergoing in the vaster court-room of the world, he still points for his defense to his character and works and lets them speak for him.

Jesus said to his judges, "Why askest thou me? ask them that heard me, what I spake unto them: behold, these know the things which I said" (John 18:21).

Christians are the witnesses that must defend Jesus before the world.

If they are not able to show by their lives that they have something in their hearts from him that is better than the spirit of this world, then his case will go hard with him.

How thoroughly should we study and practice the things which he said and did that when Christ points to us our witness may be effective for him.

2. Peter Following Afar Off

Peter appears in this scene in an unenviable light. "And Peter had followed him afar off."

This was the same Peter that a short time before had whipped out his sword and wanted to fight.

He now went stealing and skulking along in the shadows, keeping where he could see Jesus and yet not be seen.

His courage lacked stamina, and yet Peter and John compare favorably with the other disciples who "left him and fled."

Many Christians are following Christ afar off.

They have some faith, but are too timid or ashamed or fearful to come out and confess it.

They want to see Jesus, but do not want to be seen with Jesus.

Unfaithfulness in service puts a long distance between Christ and many Christians. We all lag far behind him in character and conduct, and we need to press forward until we come up close to him and can follow in his steps.

How far Christendom lags behind its Christ!

It is this wide gap between Christ and Christians that makes Christianity such a weak imitation of him and loads it down with a terrible weight of inefficiency and unfaithfulness and even odium in the world.

We ought, every one, to try to close this gap up and walk with Christ.

3. Peter Warming Himself at the Fire

Next we find Peter sitting with the officers in the court of the high priest's palace where the trial was going on, "warming himself in the light of the fire."

Anything wrong about that? Is it not right to warm one's self at a fire when it is cold?

That depends on where and how it is done.

It is always possible to do right things in terribly wrong ways. Peter was warming himself at this fire in such a way as to try to conceal his discipleship with Jesus.

He mixed in the crowd in such a jovial spirit as to make it appear that he was one of them. He was a hail fellow well met with them. Possibly he went so far as to join in their ribald jests about the poor deluded Nazarene who thought he was the King of the Jews!

May not we do this very thing ourselves?

Do not professing Christian and church members sometimes take pains to hide their religion and even make it appear that they are people of the world?

It must be confessed that often the characteristic marks of Christians that should distinguish them from others have faded out or been deliberately hidden or removed so that there is no way of telling who are professing Christians and who are not.

This ought not so to be.

It is true that Christians need not advertise and flaunt their Christian discipleship in the face of others in an ostentatious or offensive spirit.

No Christian should need to do this: his spirit should plainly mark him off from the spirit of the world.

Yet to join in a wordly company so as to erase all differences and become one of them is disloyalty and cowardice of which any Christian should be ashamed and never be guilty.

4. Peter's Denial of Jesus

Peter's jovial air and mixing with the crowd availed him nothing and quickly led to his exposure.

As he was sitting out in the court a maid of the high priest with her sharp eye spied him and said to him, "Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus." Peter put on a bold face and declared, "I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest."

Falsehood number one.

Peter is now following Jesus still farther off; in fact, he has fallen back clear out of sight of his Master.

The man who a little while before drew his sword and wanted to fight for Jesus now said he did not belong to him and did not know what they were talking about!

Peter is now plunging downward and we can see to what depths he can go.

And we can go just as deep.

The cock now crew, which was a reminder to Peter of his fall and of his further danger as Jesus had given him this sign, "Verily, I say unto thee, that thou today, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice." Yet in spite of this warning Peter kept on in his fatal course, as we often do.

Presently some bystanders said to him, "Of a truth thou art one of them; thou art a Galilean. But he began to curse, and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak."

Falsehood number two.

Is it possible that this is Peter, the disciple of Jesus who only a few hours before boasted that he would die with him, who is now cursing and swearing that he does not know him?

Is this you, Peter? Yes, this is verily Peter, to such depths may the foremost disciple fall, and may we fall.

Going back to the garden and tracing his downward course, we find that his steps were: self-confidence when he boasted that he would never forsake Jesus, whatever others might do; neglect of prayer when he fell asleep in the garden; giving way to his old rash nature when he whipped out his sword and cut off a servant's ear; following Jesus afar off when he ought to have been walking with him; joining in with the enemies of Jesus so as to identify himself with them and be counted as one of them; and finally denying Jesus, swearing that he did not know him and that he did not even know what was being talked about.

Once he started down this slippery way he did not stop until he reached the bottom.

Such is the deteriorating nature of sin, deceiving and blinding us until there is no sin we may not commit and no depth into which we may not fall.

Many are the good men and women that have gone down this road, and what others have done we may do. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

5. How Jesus Looked on Peter

Jesus in the court of the palace was in full view of Peter and at this critical point "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."

How much there may be in a look!

When Webster was delivering his famous reply in the United States Senate to Senator Hayne, he was interrupted by a Senator and Webster, like an enraged lion, turned his blazing eye on him and simply pointed his finger at him and the miserable man doubled up in his seat as though he had been smitten by a powerful blow.

The eye is the most expressive and impressive organ of the body and feature of the face, and the whole soul may be concentrated into a look.

It may smite and pierce like a sword, or it may softly caress and woo like a tender kiss.

Peter caught his Master's eye, and what did he expect? He may well have cringed and cowered before that glance as though it were a withering blast of lightning smiting with unrelenting judgment.

But not so did the Master look on Peter. It was a pained and pitying expression of face, a wounded but loving spirit shining through those eyes that Peter saw.

Jesus might have cast off and spurned such an unfaithful disciple, but he clung to him still and dealt with him in the most patient and loving spirit.

This saved Peter and the same spirit will save us.

"Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness." "For he knoweth our frame," "but the loving kindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Ps. 103).

6. Peter's Repentance

"And he went out, and wept bitterly."

So did Peter, and in this he did the right and true and noble thing.

He repented of his folly, he changed his mind, he saw things from a new point of view, he reversed the whole current of his will and personality, and henceforth he walked a transformed man.

Repentance unsealed the fountain of his heart and poured forth streams of bitter tears.

That was the grand thing about Peter: however often he actly rashly and foolishly and however deeply and disgracefully he fell, he repented and washed his conscience clean with his tears.

This path out of our sins is ever open to us, and is the only path that will lead us through penitence into forgiveness and purity and peace.

"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive" (Ps. 86:5).

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give a brief account of the trial of Jesus.
2. What was the special guilt of the priests in connection with Jesus?
3. At what wordly fires may we warm ourselves?
4. In what ways may we truly deny Jesus?
5. What is repentance?

LESSON VI—MAY 8

Peter and the Risen Lord

Lesson: John 20:1-10; 21:15-17

Golden Text: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I PETER 1:3.

Devotional Reading: I Peter 1:3-12.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Risen Lord Appears to Peter.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Fellowship with the Risen Lord.

Lesson Text: John 20:1-10; 21:15-17

Now on the first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb.
2 She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.
3 Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb.
4 And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb;
5 And stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in.
6 Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying,
7 And the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself.
8 Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed.
9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.
10 So the disciples went away again unto their own home.

15 So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me more than these He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.
16 He saith to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep.
17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Empty Tomb.

2. A Mistaken Judgment.
3. Peter and John Investigate.
4. Peter's Unconscious Influence on John.
5. Peter's Love Tested.

We are following the footsteps of Peter and we come with him now to the tomb of the risen Christ.

The resurrection of our Lord is the central column of historic Christianity on which it rests.

Throw this down and the whole structure falls into ruins; make this sure and the historic gospel is established.

It is the splendor of the resurrection that scatters the darkness of the crucifixion and kindles every page of the gospel with glory.

No one saw Jesus rise, but many saw him risen. The gospel narratives pour around this event a blaze of light such as illuminates no other miracle in the Bible.

Inspiration set it in its central place and buttressed it with many infallible proofs so that it cannot be shaken.

1. The Empty Tomb

The morning opens with the faithful women, who were last at the cross, first at the tomb. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. What were they doing there? They bought spices and brought them to anoint the body of Jesus.

This loving act has immense value as showing the state of mind of these women and of all the disciples after the crucifixion.

They believed that Jesus was dead and had no hope of a resurrection. They were utterly bewildered, scattered and crushed and supposed that all was over.

They were in no condition of mind, then, to invent or imagine a resurrection, and any theory of fraud or of vision on the part of the disciples is a psychological impossibility.

This is incidental but strong confirmation of the reality of this event.

On their way to the sepulchre the women had wondered how the stone that closed it could be removed, but when they reached it they found the stone rolled away. An earthquake had shaken it loose and left the door open for Jesus to step through. They found it contained not the body of the Lord Jesus.

Other tombs are held dear because they hold precious dust, or they are famous and draw visitors from far lands because they contain the remains of genius, but this tomb derives its world-wide significance from the fact that it is empty.

Other bodies are put in the grave to stay there, but this one could not be "cabn'd, cribb'd, confin'd" but arose again.

This empty tomb stands as a fact against all attempts to explain it away, and it is the first link in the chain of facts that prove the reality of this event.

2. A Mistaken Judgment

The other women had departed to tell the disciples, when Peter and John arrived at the tomb, and when they came to Mary Magdalene, she, supposing the body had been stolen, said unto them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him."

Mary at this point presents a deeply pathetic and significant picture.

She was troubled and weeping over what she thought was an infinite piece of mischief in the world. All her passionate faith and love and hope had been swept into utter confusion by this tragic disaster.

How often are our judgments as unfounded and mistaken?

We see the wrong side of the web of the world, and its tangle of broken threads and blurred colors distracts and distresses our minds and hearts; but on the other side, God is weaving a pattern of beauty and blessing that will forever fill us with wonder and praise.

Mary was simply breaking her heart over the baseless imagination of her own mind.

What seemed to her the desecration of her dead was really resurrection and glorification. That empty tomb, instead of taking away her Lord, gave him back to her in the fulness of life.

Are not our tears sometimes as mistaken and far astray?

Are we not living in God's world and is he not causing all things to work together for our good? Is not the grave itself but the green mountain top of a far new world?

Did our blinded eyes and unbelieving hearts but know the truth about our dead, our tears might seem to be as mistaken and baseless as the tears of Mary at the empty tomb of her risen Lord.

3. Peter and John Investigate

The women hastened to spread the news about the empty tomb, and Peter and John were the first disciples to set about an investigation.

They at first disbelieved the report as idle talk, and doubtless Peter was one of the loudest scoffers.

But presently he "went forth" and "ran" to the tomb.

This discloses in Peter an honest spirit of inquiry.

He did not assume that there could be no resurrection, but he set about finding the facts.

To this test must this question of the resurrection of Christ come: did it really happen?

And Peter did not go to consult the priests and officers who were hostile to Jesus and to a resurrection, but he started straight for the tomb.

He was going to investigate this matter at its source and acquire a first-hand knowledge of it.

In his impetuosity he ran, for if there was any truth in this wonderful report he wanted to know it quick.

Doubts concerning this event may at times seriously trouble us, and such doubts may not be blameworthy. But they become blameworthy if we rest in them and cherish them without honestly trying to find and obey the truth.

There is a way out of them and this way is the path that leads straight to Christ himself.

How did the case come out with these disciples? John outrunning Peter arrived at the tomb first and "stooping down and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in."

Peter, however, did not stop with John at the mouth of the tomb but "entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself."

Those grave clothes were mute but convincing evidence to these disciples that Jesus was indeed risen, and their unbelief now gave way to mighty faith that mastered them to the end of their days.

Some significance attaches to the particular way the napkin that had been wrapped around the head of Jesus is described as "rolled up in a place by itself," a graphic touch of an eyewitness and also a word which may imply that this cloth retained its annular shape as though it had been slipped off the head without disarranging its form.

This is what came of a candid investigation of this report about the empty tomb and the risen Jesus.

Had Peter and John cherished their scepticism, their first hastily formed impression might have hardened into prejudice and pride of opinion that never would have changed.

But their visit to the tomb opened their eyes and showed them wondrous things that dissipated their doubt and filled them with glowing faith.

A reverent study of the facts in connection with the empty tomb of Jesus is a path out of doubt into faith.

If we will candidly consider the mass and momentum, the convergence and the convincingness, of the evidence for this event we shall surely be filled with wonder that will grow into faith.

4. Peter's Unconscious Influence on John

"Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed." John, who is telling this story, modestly refers to himself as "the other disciple."

He outran Peter and arrived first at the tomb but stopped at its mouth, but when Peter came up and passed right on into the tomb, John was unconsciously influenced by Peter's action and also entered and saw and believed.

This is a fine example of how others unconsciously influence us by their example.

Every one emits a kind of subtle contagion which is catching and infects others. We are highly social and absorbent beings and are sensitive to one another's presence and peculiar character and conduct.

Suggestion and imitation insensibly draw us to do what others are doing.

We follow the crowd and may be equally influenced and led by single persons, unknown to them and even unknown to ourselves.

It is through the play of this principle that the mother molds the child into her own likeness and the father stamps his son with his own image.

One's unconscious influence may thus reach farther and go deeper into the lives of others than his conscious acts and intentions.

It is thus literally true that actions speak louder than words. "I cannot hear what you say," said Emerson, "because what you are speaks louder than your words.

One may speak ever so clearly and loudly and yet his character and life may thunder in the ears of his hearers so that they cannot hear what he says.

John entered and believed because he unconsciously followed Peter, and every true Christian is thus leading others into the Christian life.

He may be little aware of how wide and deep is his unconscious influence, but this may easily be the largest and best portion of a good man's life.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai he "knew not that the skin of his face shone," yet the people saw it.

Had Moses been conscious of it, his self-consciousness would have spoiled the beauty of his shining face.

Let us so walk that others will unconsciously follow us, and if we know it not, so much the finer is our faithfulness.

5. Peter's Love Tested

The scene of these appearances of the risen Lord shifts to the shore of lake Galilee where there occurred the touching interview of Jesus with Peter.

During all these days since the resurrection, Peter must have had an uneasy conscience over his flagrant denials of Jesus at the trial.

It is true he had repented, but the matter had not yet been made right and he had not been publicly restored.

"Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?" was the question with which Jesus delicately opened the painful subject.

The question evidently contained an allusion to Peter's boast, "If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended."

Peter answered, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

This modest and beautiful answer shows that a great change had been wrought in Peter.

The spirit of self-sufficiency and boasting is gone, and he is simply a humble and sincere disciple who has no thought of exalting himself over others and whose profoundest assurance is that he loves Jesus.

"Feed my lambs," was the response of Jesus. And as Peter had thrice shamefully denied his Master, so was he now thrice tested by this penetrating inquiry from his Lord.

This incident is rich in suggestions.

One is the delicately considerate way in which Jesus dealt with his fallen disciple. He did not harshly accuse and humiliate him, but opened the subject gently and yet went to the core of the matter.

Christ is not a hard Master, and it is never his object to inflict unnecessary indignity upon us.

But when we go to him penitent he ever receives us graciously and restores us fully.

Another lesson is that the great cure for sin and safeguard against temptation is love for Christ.

When Peter loved himself he was frail and fell, but when he loved Jesus with absorbing devotion no temptation could touch him.

And still another lesson is that love for Jesus should express itself in service. "Feed my lambs."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why were the disciples not expecting a resurrection?
2. Why do we make so many mistakes in our judgments?
3. How may we investigate the truth as to the resurrection of Christ?
4. Give other instances of unconscious influence.
5. How does God bring us to repentance?

LESSON VII—MAY 15

Peter at Pentecost

Lesson: Acts 2:12-14, 32-41

Golden Text: Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 2:5-11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Peter at Pentecost.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Source of Spiritual Power.

Lesson Text: Acts 2: 12-14, 32-41

12 And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this

13 But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, *saying*, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words.

32 This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.

34 For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself,
The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?

38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Amazed People.

2. *Powerful Preaching.*
3. *Pricked Hearts.*
4. *Repentant Souls.*
5. *Wonderful Conversions.*

The day of Pentecost marks an epoch in the Christian church.

All things grew into readiness for this day.

The harvest feast drew to Jerusalem an immense multitude of people, who thus furnished a compact mass and rich soil in which to sow the gospel seed, and who, in turn, became winged seeds to waft it out over the world; and the Feast of First Fruits took on a new significance and glory as it signalized the first fruits of that harvest of redeemed souls that shall grow into a multitude that no man can number.

Times and seasons have their place and power in the spiritual world.

The days are not all alike to the Lord and some things cannot be done until the set time.

Christ waited centuries for the fulness of time, and we must often wait for revival and blessing until the right time is fully come. Yet the day itself will not bring the blessing; we must get ready for it by fulfilling its human conditions.

1. Amazed People

The human conditions were ready in praying people, all with one accord in one place, and now the divine manifestation came.

The Spirit found the continuous circuit and flashed forth in power.

The coming of the Spirit was manifested through physical signs, for God ever uses material crutches to support spiritual infirmities. There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.

It seemed as though the tense heavens had broken earth vard and let loose a flood of power that overwhelmed the assembly.

Tongues of fire also appeared and "sat upon each one of them," each believer becoming a flaming torch of spiritual light and heat.

All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to give utterance to their strange experience.

No wonder that we then read that "they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying, what meaneth this."

They began to give explanations of the strange state of the assembly and some resorted to physical causes and even coarsely charged that the disciples and believers were simply drunk.

We are much given to marveling in our day at the growing wonders of our world, especially in fields of science and invention. We now have disclosed to our eyes a heavens that amaze and frighten us, and our magic machines fill our sky with shooting stars that keep us in a constant state of bewilderment.

Yet, did we but know it, the greatest wonders are not material but spiritual.

The human mind is an infinitely greater marvel than the heavens, for it thinks the heavens and reconstructs their whole vast system.

The soul is even greater than the mind, for it includes all the mystic deeps of feeling and aspiration and worship.

The facts of the spirit are as real as and infinitely of higher value than the facts of matter.

Religion is as real as a railroad and will carry us farther, even beyond this world into the infinite and eternal.

If we had our eyes unsealed and our spiritual sensitivity quickened we would behold wondrous things in the Bible and in the spiritual life and would be amazed at things that are now largely hidden from our blind or dim vision.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

2. *Powerful Preaching*

The coarse charge that the disciples were drunk was the text from which Peter preached the greatest sermon in the history of the Christian church.

The fisherman-preacher, illiterate and rough, that only a few weeks before had sworn that he did not know Christ, now stood up for him with marvelous courage and might.

Peter began his speech by courteously refuting the charge of drunkenness and then proceeded to work out the true cause of the wonderful manifestation.

He built his argument on foundations on which the Jews themselves were standing.

Their own Scriptures were his authorities and witnesses. He quoted one of their own prophets and then said, "This is that": This thing which you see here today is just that which Joel predicted back in his day.

He appealed to such facts as "the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day," and he quoted him as their own unquestioned authority.

His sermon was rooted down in their own history and led on to the conclusion that Jesus was none other than their own Messiah and reached its climax in the declaration and appeal, "Let all the house of Israel therefore assuredly know, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."

It was a great sermon that marched with irresistible logic to its conclusion and practical application.

3. *Pricked Hearts.*

Such a sermon could not fail of effect, it shot to its mark straight and piercing as an arrow, and "they were pricked in their heart."

Better is this record than if it had read that they were gratified in their taste or pleased with the preacher.

Preaching that is mainly a display of the preacher's powers of rhetoric or eloquence may satisfy the critical judgment and delight the artistic

sensibilities, but it will not convict the conscience and convert the sinner.

The soul is not reached until the heart is reached; and the first thing the heart needs is to be pricked.

It is full of pride and selfishness and all manner of evil and it needs to be cut and stung with a sense of guilt.

The first means of being cured of disease is to know that we have it, and the physician that discloses it to us even by thrusting his probe into it is our friend.

The true preacher must prick us, and we should not be offended at him when he draws the sword of the Spirit and thrusts it into us to convict us of sin.

The smart of sin may be the beginning of mercy, and God is kind to us when he makes us feel it.

Under Peter's tremendous proof and accusation the Jews began to realize what they had done in crucifying Jesus, and under the awful sense of their guilt they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

They were right in thinking that something had to be done.

Some diseases will run their course and heal themselves, but sin is not of this self-healing nature and only grows worse and worse. The evil look leaps into lust, and hatred hatches out murder.

Sin left alone soaks through and saturates the soul, and something must be done or its final end is death.

The convicted Jews were further right in thinking that something had to be done by themselves. Salvation is a cosmic process involving action by many agents in heaven and on earth, but there is a personal part that each one must do for himself or he never will be saved.

The chain of salvation has had all its links but one forged from the eternal counsel of God to the present hour, and the only link that now remains to complete the chain is our own action.

4. Repentant Souls

Peter, without the loss of a moment or the waste of a word, gave an answer that exactly and fully met the question of the hour.

The substance of his answer was condensed into its very first word, "Repent!"

This is the first recorded word in the preaching of Jesus, and it everywhere stands in the forefront of the gospel.

It is not often necessary to criticise and correct our English translation, at least for practical purposes, but in this vital instance it misses the meaning and falls short of the original. The word repent means to have pain, regret, sorrow, in view of past misdeeds. This is not the meaning of the Greek word translated repent, but the word literally means, Change your mind. The word mind in this connection means the whole soul in all its powers of thinking, feeling, doing, its passing states and permanent disposition.

It is a broad deep word that grasps the inner character and the outer life and covers the whole man.

Change this mind, revolutionize your whole personality, is thus the first word Christ speaks to us and is the message of the gospel.

Christianity is a revolution starting in the mind and spreading down through the heart and out into the life and creating a new man in Christ.

Repentance in the sense of painful regret is only a fraction of it and cannot cover the whole ground.

If we go through the new Testament and substitute for the word repent this colloquial phrase but literal translation, change your mind, it will give new meaning and freshness and force to the gospel and bring home to us a great duty and blessing.

This word rolls a tremendous weight of responsibility upon us.

We are to change our minds away from sin towards Christ, out of indifference and inaction into faith and obedience.

This change is something we can work and it expresses itself in baptism accompanied with the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter pressed this promise upon his hearers and widened it out until it reached down through the ages even unto us.

5. Wonderful Conversions

A wonderful scene now followed. Three thousand souls were converted and the little church became a multitude in a day.

This is in the proportion of twenty-five converts for each church member, but we have slowed down the rate of increase until we have reversed this proportion and it is now twenty-five church members to each convert.

If the church of today were only baptized and saturated with the Spirit as was this Pentecostal church, how rapidly would the kingdom of God march around the world and how soon would Christ reign!

The steps these converts took are distinctly marked. They gladly received the word.

The truth persuaded them and they changed their minds. They did not allow the powerful prejudice they had against Jesus to blind them, but they threw this off and believed on him.

We have the power to do this.

Purely intellectual truth, such as a scientific theory, is only indirectly and inconsiderably under our control as it is almost wholly a matter of evidence and logic, but moral truth affecting character and conduct and affecting our attitude towards Jesus Christ is directly and largely subject to our spiritual affinity and choice.

We can receive this word and we ought to receive it gladly.

Next, they were baptized, they received the ordinance and sign of discipleship.

They did not begin to pick and choose among Christ's commandments and draw the line at some point across the path of obedience, but they gave him their undivided loyalty and kept following all his steps.

Finally, these converts continued steadfast.

They did not start out enthusiastically and then slow down and at last stop, but they kept on. They continued in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, they kept faith and works growing together; and they continued "breaking bread at home," probably the Lord's Supper, and "praising God" at the prayer meeting.

They began gladly and continued steadfastly, and such Christian life goes on to perfection.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was the feast of Pentecost?
2. What is the place of wonder in our life?
3. What are the points of a good sermon?
4. Is the sense of sin in our day declining?
5. Are we losing the art of converting souls?

LESSON VIII—MAY 22

Peter Heals the Lame Man

Lesson: Acts 3:1-10; 4:8-10

Golden Text: In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein ye must be saved. Acts 4:12.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 35:1-6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Giving Our Best to Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Gifts That Are Better Than Money.

Lesson Text: Acts 3:1-10; 4:8-10

Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour.*
2 And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;
3 who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms.
4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.
5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them.
6 But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.
7 And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength.
8 And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.
9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:
10 and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders,
9 if we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole;
10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* in him doth this man stand here before you whole.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Lame Beggar at the Gate Beautiful.

2. Peter's Sympathetic Look.

3. The Lame Beggar Healed.
4. The Gospel of Self-help.

Immediately after Pentecost, with all its excitement and astonishing results, we find Peter and John quietly going up into the temple to pray.

The marvelous outpouring of the Spirit was succeeded by regular worship.

The flood had subsided, and the stream of life had fallen back into its ordinary channel.

Special services and revival days can never do away with the common means of grace and daily religious living.

We cannot live healthily at a fever heat; the pulse must slow down to its normal rate. There are special seasons and golden hours in life, but the general web of the years is woven of common days.

We are to beware of sensational excitement that unfits us for systematic work and worship.

1. A Lame Beggar at the Gate Beautiful

As Peter and John were passing up the marble steps of the temple and were about to enter through the gate Beautiful, so massive that it required twenty men to swing it on its hinges, a beggar, lame from birth, sitting at the gate, accosted them and asked for alms.

The poor and crippled have always crept up to the door of the church, and, with all its shortcomings, no other institution has treated them so kindly.

May not this beggar be taken as an illustration of the condition of men in general, was he not simply an atom of the great world itself, beggared and crippled and lost in sin?

There is a great deal of physical beggary in the world and it presents pitiful aspects as it meets us on the streets or breeds and festers in crowded tenements and slums.

But there is spiritual beggary that is far wider and deeper.

Men generally are beggared and lame in their souls of spiritual life. They are smitten with poverty of high and noble thought, of penitence and purity, of sympathy and love, of prayer and worship.

Their bodies may be clothed with fine garments, but their souls are clothed with filthy rags; they may feed their stomachs with rich food, but they are attempting to feed their spirits with the husks that swine eat.

Money does not save a man from beggary: the true beggar is he who has nothing but money.

"Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

The beggar was asking for alms. We must not be too hard on the poor fellow, for he was doing the best he knew, but money was not his great need. Money could not heal his crippled ankles and make him walk.

He needed healing first.

This is a mistake that men are making to this day the world over. In their spiritual lameness and beggary, they are not calling for healing and life, but for money, wealth, ease, pleasure.

Money has its place in life, but there is something that the beggared human soul needs more than this and before this. "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Thus this lame beggar is a vivid picture of man in his sin, beggared in his soul, seeking the wrong thing, asking for gold when he needs grace, and helpless to save himself.

The earth itself is a beggared world lying at the gate Beautiful of the universe, a Temple whose stairs are stars and whose jeweled gates are blazing constellations; lying there covered with rags, a mass of sores, madly crying for gold when it needs the infinite grace of God to cleanse and clothe it and give it life.

And God looks down upon it in infinite pity and love and has sent his Son to save it.

2. Peter's Sympathetic Look

How did Peter and John deal with this beggar?

They did not hurry by him and leave him to his fate.

They did not think that they could do nothing for him, had no use for him and need waste no time on him.

But they stopped to hear his petition.

Like the good Samaritan with the wounded Jew, they forgot themselves and saw only the beggar. "And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us."

It was not a cold careless glance that Peter gave the beggar, but a deep, earnest, sympathetic gaze.

He looked at him with his whole soul; he poured the fulness of his heart out through his eyes upon that beggar.

If we would help people, we must fasten our eyes upon them and see into their condition.

One reason we do so little for others is because we do not see and feel their needs.

"Human nature," says Ruskin, "is kind and generous, but it is narrow and blind, and can only with difficulty conceive anything but what it immediately sees. People would instantly care for others as well as for themselves if they could only imagine others as well as themselves. Let a child fall into a river before the roughest man's eyes: he will usually do what he can to get it out, even at some risk to himself; and all the town will triumph in the saving of that one little life. Let the same man be shown that hundreds of children are dying of fever for want of some sanitary measure which will cost him trouble to urge, and he will make no effort; and probably all the town would resist him

if he did. So, also, the lives of many people are passed in a succession of petty anxieties about themselves, and gleaning of minute interests and mean pleasures in their immediate circle, because they never make any effort to look beyond it, or to know anything about the mighty world in which their lives are fading, like blades of bitter grass in fruitless fields" (*Lectures on Art*, page 93).

Fasten your eyes on somebody in distress, and, though he be a beggar, he will weave himself into your sympathies and interest until he becomes a strand in your life and you will feel him to be a brother and a child of God.

3. The Lame Beggar Healed

Peter not only looked, but he also acted. "Silver and gold have I none,"—of course he had none, for he was a preacher—"but what I have, that give I thee."

We must not think we have nothing to give because we have no money. Money is often the poorest gift we can bestow.

One may cheer and comfort us by his sympathetic presence, when gold would only be another weight on our heart.

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Was not this a critical hour in the history of Christianity? The whole destiny of the gospel at this moment trembled in the balance.

Consider the situation. When Jesus was with his disciples he wrought miracles and at his command the lame walked and the blind saw. He promised them that they should have this same power. Now he was gone. Pentecost had passed and things had settled down to their ordinary level.

Peter, going up into the temple to pray, stops before this crippled beggar and in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, bids him walk.

The critical question is, Will this command have in it any of the old power?

Will it work? Will the lame man lie still or will he get up? On that question trembled the gospel of Christ. Had that beggar lain there

unaffected by the healing virtue of Christ, the gospel would have received a mortal blow and have perished on the spot.

And now, what happened at this momentous instant?

The lame beggar got up! He leaping up stood and walked.

That moment the perpetual power of Christ's name was proved and it started out on an ever-widening, ever-brightening path through the world.

The name of Christ is not a mere blaze of straw, but is the shining of the Sun of Righteousness and is the brightness of God himself.

Not only on the temple steps in Jerusalem did it work wonders but over all continents and seas and round and round the world does it bid sinners, beggared and lame and helpless in their souls, to rise and walk in newness of life.

We must trust this Name and use it to walk ourselves and to save others.

4. The Gospel of Self-Help

Thus the beggar asked for gold and he got grace.

How much larger and better was the answer than the prayer?

How much richer was Peter's gift, such as he had, than money! What would silver and gold have done for this man?

Nothing but keep him in his lameness and rags.

For years he had been receiving money and was a beggar still. The pittances of silver dropped into his hand only bound the burden of his beggary on his back. But one touch of grace gave him life and made him a man.

Peter, instead of giving him money, gave him the power of making money.

Instead of helping him temporarily from the outside, he helped him permanently on the inside; he gave him the power of self-help; he made him stand and walk on his own feet.

That ended his beggary; never more did he ask alms. This is the aim and method of the gospel.

Why, asks the worldly man whose charity may consist in criticising other people's charity, does not the church do more charitable work? Look at all this waste of money in home and foreign missions: why is not this money taken and given to the poor?

Because this use of money would not help the poor; this would only tend to weaken their sense of independence and their power of self-help.

There is a work for charity to do and the church in some degree is doing it; but charity is no cure for sin, and indiscriminate charity is a mother of pauperism.

Such charity, instead of eradicating the evil, roots it deeper; it makes beggars, instead of curing them.

The work of Christ and his church is to bid and help people to get up and stand on their own feet.

Christ cleanses the soul, unbinds its guilt, strikes off the fetters of evil thoughts and habits, and liberates and develops its higher powers. Then man gets up out of his spiritual lameness and beggary and begins to live a new and higher, freer and richer life.

The Spirit of Christ makes the soul strong and free within and then the whole life feels the thrill of new power.

The tree, having been invigorated at its root, bursts into leaf and blossom. The gospel begets self-respect and self-help.

"Why do ragged people never go to church?" was a question once asked of the editor of London "Punch." "Because," answered the editor, and possibly he was not a very pronounced church man, "when people go to church, they soon cease to be ragged."

This is the theory of the gospel. Silver and gold are not the cure for the beggary of this world.

What we need is not more gold but more grace.

Little is gained by putting better clothes on the body, if the soul is still clad in filthy rags; or by gorging the stomach with richer food, if the heart still feeds on husks.

Here we lie beggared and lame in our sin: what matters it that successful business drops silver and gold into our hands?

Coin is not cure.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth is passing by and bids us rise; let us in his name get up, and then we shall stand and walk as men in newness of life, praising God.

Peter appealed to the rulers and elders of the people, declaring that "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, . . whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole," and we make the same appeal and declaration to the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some dangers connected with revivals?
2. What are some of the causes of poverty?
3. Why are we so indifferent to the ills of others?
4. Can the gospel remove the social conditions of poverty?

LESSON IX—MAY 29

Peter Undaunted by Persecution

Lesson: Acts 5:27-35, 38-42

Golden Text: We must obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 27:1-6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Standing Firm under Persecution.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Source of Courage.

Lesson Text: Acts 5:27-35, 38-42

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree.

31 Him did God exalt with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.

32 And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is* the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33 But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart, and were minded to slay them.

34 But there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in honor of all the people, and commanded to put the men forth a little while.

35 And he said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves as touching these men, what ye are about to do.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown:

39 But if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.

42 And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus *as* the Christ.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Charge Against the Apostles.

2. Peter's Answer.

3. Gamaliel's Advice.

4. Rejoicing Apostles.

The rapid growth of the new Christian faith and church under the preaching of the apostles quickly drew upon them the persecution of the old established Judaistic church and the reigning ecclesiastical authorities.

The priests took alarm and saw that something must be done.

They were Sadducees, or at least joined hands with the Sadducees, and therefore the doctrine of the resurrection which the apostles preached ran athwart their denial of this doctrine and excited their extreme hostility.

At this point in the story they seized the apostles and put them in prison.

They had already tried this method of suppressing the heresy and always found it breaking out more vigorous and victorious than ever; yet they never learned anything from their repeated failure, never suspected the legitimacy and adequacy of their means, but only believed in it more blindly and applied it more oppressively.

Yet we must be charitable toward them, for the idea of religious toleration and liberty was yet unborn and they were simply children of their time.

On the night preceding the events of the lesson an angel of the Lord opened the prison door and let loose the apostles, who returned to their work and early the next morning were again preaching in the temple. When the Sandhedrin sent for the prisoners they were missing, and there was excitement among the bewildered officers.

1. The Charge Against the Apostles

When word was brought that the escaped prisoners were again preaching in the temple, officers were sent after them.

They found the preachers and rearrested them, but handled them gently, for the fickle fanatical populace were swinging around to the apostles and were ready to resent violence with stones.

The apostles presently stood the second time before the Sanhedrin and their trial began. The high priest summed up the situation in his statement, "We strictly charged you that you teach not in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

The offense here charged against the apostles contains three counts.

First, they had disobeyed the command and defied the authority of the priests, and this is always a grave offense among ecclesiastics.

Next, they had filled Jerusalem with their teaching.

This was true and was another "good deed" (4:9) for which they were being tried.

Solomon had filled Jerusalem with idolatrous shrines, its streets had been spattered with the blood of prophets, the priests and Pharisees had made it a whited sepulchre full of dead men's bones, and it was time it was being filled with something different, even some purifying presence and power.

This the gospel was and is in every city and town and heart.

Their last charge was that the apostles were intending "to bring this man's blood upon" them.

They never name the Man, as though his very Name were an unpronounceable terror that put a dagger to their hearts.

The apostles had no such intention and did not need to bring the blood of Jesus on them, for they had put it on themselves when they sent him to the cross.

The blood of Jesus Christ is on the world to this day.

That White Spirit was crimsoned with his own blood on the cross: that was the way this world treated the only perfectly good man that ever appeared in it.

This guilt of our race is upon us and we set our seal upon it or are freed from it according to our attitude towards him.

2. Peter's Answer

Once again Peter stood forward as spokesman and answered the charge, and once more the promise was fulfilled that it should be given to them what they should speak.

No trained orator after prolonged study could have framed a more masterly reply.

"We must obey God rather than men," was the grand self-evident principle and eternal verity with which he began his defense.

How strong is this little word "must" or "ought," having in it the force of tons of moral dynamite, against which, when it is loosed, nothing can stand.

This is the word that creates history and comes down through the centuries like a sweeping flood, uprooting giant iniquities and bearing on its bosom conscience and liberty and righteousness.

This is the word that inspired Paul and Luther and Wycliff and Luther and Lincoln.

This is the word that created modern England and Scotland and America.

This is the word that moved Seward to exclaim in the United States Senate, "There is a higher law than human constitutions," and thereby snapped asunder the shackles of the slave. This is the word that declares, "Nothing is settled until it is settled right."

This little word of a single short syllable is slowly lifting the moral level of the world as central forces lift continents.

Standing on this eternal principle with this truth incarnated in us, we are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Peter proceeded to give a condensed statement of the situation, declaring that "the God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree. Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."

That was unwelcome truth and pointed preaching. It is a brave preacher that can speak thus to his hearers, piercing their guilt to the quick.

He further declared, "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

The witness of these apostles remains in its full force for us, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to them that obey him is still our privilege and blessing.

3. Gamaliel's Advice

This bold speech of Peter cut the priests to the heart and exasperated them into a fury of rage and hatred.

They could scarcely control themselves and were on the point of wreaking summary vengeance on the apostles, when one of their number rose up and began to address them in tones of quietness and reason.

This was Gamaliel, a distinguished and influential member of the Sanhedrin.

He was a grandson of the celebrated Hillel, the founder of the more liberal of the two schools in Jerusalem, and was the teacher of Paul (Acts 22:3).

All that is known of him indicates that he was an open-minded and liberal man, a student of Greek literature, a reformer among the Jews and a cosmopolitan in his sympathies with the Gentiles.

There is nothing certainly known to prove that he had any disposition to accept Christianity, and the tradition that he was a secret disciple and was baptized by Peter and Paul, current in the second century, is now rejected.

This liberal Pharisee now proceeded to reason with his fanatical and furious associates concerning the situation. They were for cutting the matter short with violence.

Gamaliel counseled caution.

He recalled two recent instances in their history in which local leaders had stirred up insurrections against Rome, and, after a brief success, had perished. The point of his illustrations was that if the apostles were mere heretics, they would soon likely collide with Rome and be crushed.

However he left room in his argument for another view of the case.

"But if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God."

Gamaliel took a prudential view of the situation; they had tried violence, and blood could not extinguish the flames. He would now let the new doctrine run its course and let history decide the issue.

He plainly advocated the policy of "watchful waiting."

Whether his proposal was merely a device to restrain his colleagues from resorting to renewed violence, or whether he had an incipient suspicion and budding faith that the new doctrine was of God and Jesus the true Messiah, we cannot determine.

Possibly the facts of the gospel known to him and the earnestness and power of the apostles were making inroads upon his scepticism and gaining a hearing in his heart; and if this were his state of mind and he had followed the whispering of the Spirit he would himself have become a splendid convert and powerful apostle.

He did not follow this path and remained in the shadow of indecision.

It is possible for one to be near the kingdom and yet miss eternal life.

Gamaliel's principle of submitting new things to the test of time is good within proper limits.

When we certainly know that any doctrine or movement is wrong or hurtful, we are to do our utmost to stop it by all legitimate means.

But it is often wise to restrain ourselves from headlong and violent action and let time solve some problems.

God may be in movements that we think are wholly erroneous and destructive; and if his truth and might are in them we cannot stop them. Time and again have theologians and religious people tried to oppose the progress of teachings, as in the field of science, which afterwards were shown to be true and were then built into the temple of Christian teaching and even into systematic theology.

Gamaliel appealed to the verdict of history, and how grandly has that court given its decision?

Not only the Jews, but the imperial Romans themselves threw all their might against "this work," but it moved on with the irresistibleness of the planet in its course and has ploughed its way deep through the centuries.

Tried by this test, "this work" "is of God," and in vain do the heathen rage against it.

4. Rejoicing Apostles

The counsel of Gamaliel prevailed. It was dangerous to kill the apostles, as this would invoke inquiry from the Roman authorities and might involve serious consequences, and therefore the Sanhedrin took a less violent course.

The apostles were called back into the presence of the counsel and whipped with scourges.

This punishment was usually inflicted by tying the culprit to a pillar and flogging him on the back with a scourge having three lashes, an official standing by and reading selected portions of the law between the strokes.

The priests could not let the apostles go without making them feel some measure of their wrath, and so they sent them out, possibly with bleeding backs, and enjoined them "not to speak in the name of Jesus."

The apostles went forth from the council, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name."

A bleeding back is no easy burden, but love makes all things light, and the apostles bore the suffering and disgrace in a joyous spirit because they were sustained and inspired by their love for their Master.

The prohibition the priests put upon their preaching could not restrain them for a single moment, and "every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ."

Let us continue every day to teach and preach Jesus as the Lord Christ, in the temple and at home, in public and in private, and thus the kingdom will move on through all opposition towards its triumph.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was the Sanhedrin?
2. What is the usual effect of persecution on any truth or movement?
3. Is it as wrong for us to persecute others as it is for others to persecute us?
4. Give other instances of how time has solved many problems that were too much for the men of their day.

LESSON X—JUNE 5

Peter Preaching to Gentiles

Lesson: Acts 10:34-48

Golden Text: For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him. ROMANS 10:12.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 67:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Taking the Gospel to All Races.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How the Gospel Overcomes Race Prejudice.

Lesson Text: Acts 10:34-48

34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.
36 The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—
37 That saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;
38 *Even* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.
39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree.
40 Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest,
41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, *even* to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.
42 And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God *to be* the Judge of the living and the dead.
43 To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.
44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.
45 And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.
46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,
47 Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?
48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Peter's Astonishing Discovery.

2. The Life of Jesus Christ.

3. Witnesses.
4. The Manifestation of the Spirit.
5. Can Any Man Forbid?

We next find Peter down at Joppa and Caesarea where he had a remarkable experience that revolutionized his views of the gospel.

At Joppa he had a vision of a sheet let down from heaven containing all manner of beasts which he was bidden to eat, and when he refused he was taught by a voice, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

A few days before Peter had his vision, Cornelius, a Roman officer stationed at Caesarea, forty miles to the north, had a vision in which he was bidden to send for Peter.

The messengers from Cornelius found Peter and brought him to Caesarea, and then Cornelius told his story to Peter.

This situation is the background of our lesson.

This affair at Caesarea precipitated the first council at Jerusalem called to decide the question whether the Gentiles should be admitted to the Christian church (Chapter 11) and was the opening gun in the great battle between the conservative Judaizers, who were Jewish Christians who tried to restrict the church to the Jews, and the liberal Christians who opened the door of the church to the Gentiles.

1. Peter's Astonishing Discovery

Cornelius told his story and Peter heard it with astonishment and it wrought in him a profound revolution.

Here was a Gentile that was manifestly under the guidance and blessing of Jehovah.

Peter's whole creed and habit of thought and the heredity distilled into him out of more than a thousand years of history experienced a jar and shock at the discovery.

His most deeply inbred thought was that God was a respecter of persons; that he put a wide difference between the Jew and the Gentile, with all the favor on the side of the Jew; that the Jew was his chosen

child, the favorite of heaven, enjoying a monopoly of divine grace, in whose veins ran better blood than was to be found outside the charmed circle of Israel's race; and that the Gentile was an outcast, unclean, with no rights that God or Jew was bound to respect, at most receiving only some crumbs of God's uncovenanted mercies.

He believed and thanked God that Jehovah loved only one nation and that outside its borders he had no children and no interest.

But this distinction that hitherto had been so wide and deep and ineffaceable in his mind was here suddenly blotted out.

In a moment it melted away and he saw with astonishment that there is no such distinction, that "God is no respecter of persons," and that "in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him."

There is a sense, of course, in which God is a respecter of persons: he respects their inner moral character.

But he does not respect their outer condition, as the Jews thought.

Birth and blood, ancestry and heredity, race and rank, wealth and social standing, fashion and fame, creed and church, are not matters that determine God's relation to and dealing with people.

His classification runs along no such superficial lines as these, but strikes deep into the moral character and heart.

If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, but no other condition excludes from his fellowship.

God has no favorites in the sense that some people think.

Sectarianism is apt to breed in us the old Jewish feeling of divine exclusiveness. It is easy for us to think that our church is a little nearer to heaven's gate than any other and that God has a specially comfortable feeling when he looks on us.

Some small sectarians say outright that their church is the only true

church and they unblushingly relegate all other Christians to the uncovenanted mercies of the heathen.

But such antiquated narrowness must excite the mirth as well as the pity of heaven.

Provincial patriotism may have the same narrowing, blinding effect in leading us to think that our country is also a favorite of God and that he smiles on us as on no other nation.

It is time that we were learning that the Bible is a broad book, that the world is wide and that "the earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

The Father has many children and his grace flows over all human inequalities of condition and class as the atmosphere flows down into the valleys and up over the mountain tops.

2. The Life of Jesus Christ

Peter now gives a condensed life of Jesus Christ which is an admirable miniature cut like a cameo into a sharp likeness.

The word came "unto the children of Israel" as "good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ," and this description covers the whole life and work of Jesus, for it is good tidings unto this day.

His active ministry is compressed into one marvelous shining line, "who went about doing good."

Could the ministry of Jesus be summed up any more completely and graphically?

He went about, not waiting for people to come to him but going to them and seeking them out wherever in their sin and suffering they needed him.

This is the primary root of the gospel: not that we first went to God, but that he first came to us, so loving all the world that he sent his only begotten Son to save it.

And he went about doing good.

Not once did he ever do evil or harm; never once did he hurt a child or wound a heart or cast reproach upon an outcast; but all his ministry was beneficence, his eye was tender with love, his hand was help and his heart was patience and forgiveness and sympathy.

He went through the sinful and sorrowing world like a beam of white light through the smoky atmosphere or as a balmy breeze and shower of rain over parched ground.

Deeds of mercy were his footprints, and while hastening to one good work he dropped another by the way.

And down through the centuries his course has been marked by churches, schools, hospitals and a multitude of blessings that have made Christendom his monument, though it is still sadly disfigured by human failure and falsity.

Peter swept on in his rapid discourse to the cross of Jesus, "whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree."

No life of Jesus, however brief, could leave out this central fact of the cross crimsoned with his blood, at once the witness of Jewish guilt and of the redemption of the world.

From the cross Peter steps to the resurrection, growing particular in his recital of its events, which brought vivid memories to him.

Such is the biography of this marvelous life, compressed into a few pregnant words; and yet the world itself would not contain all the books that would record all that Jesus said and did and all the leaves and fruits that have come from this precious Seed that fell into the earth and perished that it might come up in countless harvests of blessing till the end of time.

3. Witnesses

These were tremendous declarations to make to an audience that was mostly composed of Gentiles and Peter was prepared to back them up with proper evidence.

He took the stand himself as a witness and gave very direct and positive personal testimony to the reality of the facts he had stated.

"And we are witnesses of all the things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem."

When it came to the matter of the resurrection Peter grows very explicit: "Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

Here is witness to this event that is positive and personal, detailed and explicit, by a disciple of Jesus and an eyewitness of these events.

Peter was a man of keen observation and sound judgment, as a fisherman who was trained in the school of experience that called for such skill, and he gave his solemn testimony on these tremendous matters to Cornelius and his other hearers. He felt his responsibility in the case, for Jesus himself "charged us," he declared, "to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." He went further and rooted the evidence for his declarations back among the prophets: "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."

The mission of Christ thus had a great background and was incorporated in the plan of the ages. It was no isolated unimportant event, but it is a link in a chain that stretches from eternity to eternity.

All this witness is still available for us, assuring us that we are committing ourselves to no cunningly devised fable but to a solid foundation of competent and trustworthy testimony.

4. The Manifestation of the Spirit

The sealing of this testimony of Peter was not long delayed. Even "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word."

The manifestation was accompanied and evidenced by signs that they were familiar with, the gift of tongues. Then "they of the circumcision," or the Jews present, "were amazed . . because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit."

This was an unexpected and startling event and blessing.

Hitherto the gift of the Holy Spirit, as they supposed, had been restricted to the Jews, but here the same gift in equal measure was poured out upon the Gentiles.

An impossible and scandalous thing to claim, Peter and all the apostles would have said before this experience, but now he had to believe his own eyes.

A little later up at Jerusalem, Peter, in giving an account of this event, said:—"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning." A truly astounding fact was this that the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles even as upon the Jews.

When shall we learn the splendid breadth and beauty and blessing of this gift that falls on others, whatever their race and class and condition, "even as on us?"

Thus does the grace of God, like the atmosphere that is bounded by no mountain range or ocean shore, flow everywhere and bathe all men in its blessed tide.

5. Can Any Man Forbid?

Peter was now on the way to the full realization of the unrestricted grace of God and could not stop at any half-way point.

At once he exclaimed, "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"

Could he let God outdo him in granting the gift of divine grace?

Since God had given the substance of the blessing, could any man forbid the sign?

This point admits of practical application to us.

Ought we not to go as far as God in bestowing upon others, however they may be separated from us, the same blessing which God bestows upon us and recognize their equal right with us in his favor and church and kingdom?

If we start with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ there is for us no stopping place until we have gone all the way with him in his grace and fellowship.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Are there still discoveries in the kingdom of God that would astonish us if they were revealed to us?

2. What are some of the most important "Lives of Christ" that have been written in our day?

3. Does the old spirit of Jewish exclusiveness linger among Christians today?

4. In what ways can we bear witness for Christ?

5. What are some hindrances we may throw in the way of God's free grace?

6. Is race prejudice as great an evil in our day as it was in the days of the apostles? and how may we overcome it?

LESSON XI—JUNE 12

Peter Delivered from Prison

Lesson: Acts 12:5-17

Golden Text: Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but Jehovah delivereth him out of them all. PSALM 34:19.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 34:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Does God Deliver Us?

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Power of United Prayer.

Lesson Text: Acts 12:5-17

5 Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and guards before the door kept the prison.

7 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell: and he smote Peter on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out and followed; and he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.

10 And when they were past the first and the second guard, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and straightway the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth, that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying.

13 And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was even so. And they said, It is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said, Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Prayer for Peter in Prison.

2. A Divine Deliverance.

3. An Iron and a Wooden Gate.
4. Part-Way Guidance.
5. An Unexpected Answer to Prayer.

We find Peter back again in prison. Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, had whetted his sword against the Christians. James, the brother of John, was the first to fall.

This act made a successful hit with the Jews, and Herod bid still higher for popularity by seizing Peter.

It was Passover week and it would not do to profane the holy season with an execution.

The Jews were more careful of the blood of their sacrifices than they were of the blood of their fellowmen, and the wickedest men are often very particular about some religious rites.

So Peter, who was used to going to jail for Christ's sake, was locked up and the Jews had a comfortable feeling as they thought of their victim lying there waiting for his day.

1. Prayer for Peter in Prison

But the church was waiting, too, not for Peter's execution, but in prayer before God for his deliverance.

Never did there seem to be a more hopeless case for prayer.

Peter was not only in prison, but unusual precautions had been taken to keep him there. He was bound with two chains and four soldiers guarded him day and night, two at his side and two at the door.

Peter had slipped out of their jail once before (5:19), and the Jews were determined that this should not happen again.

They were sure they had their man this time and that he would get out only when he came out to be stoned to death or cut to pieces with a sword.

But while so much force was being massed around Peter to keep him in, somewhere in that city believers were meeting and taking measures to get him out.

They were obscure and humble people; they had no arms and were devising no plan of attack; they had no money or political influence: what were they doing?

They were simply praying.

Do we say "simply praying" as though this were a mere sentimental matter of no practical force?

Was not this the greatest thing they could do by which they identified themselves with the will of God and became strong with his strength?

"Kept in prison: but prayer was made," were thus the two sides of this case, a conflict of prison against prayer, of stone and iron against spirit, of man against God.

In such a case there can be no doubt of the ultimate issue.

When trouble confronts the church; when worldliness is chilling its heart and paralysis is creeping through its members, let prayer be made earnestly of the Church unto God.

Prayer harmonizes our hearts, energizes our whole personality, puts us in the current of God's will and bears us on to victory.

2. A Divine Deliverance

Peter was delivered in an unexpected way. An angel appeared in prison in the night, touched the sleeping apostle and awoke him, and they stole out through the opened iron gate into the street.

An angel had delivered Peter before, and the opening scenes of the gospel were frequently attended with angel ministry.

No one supposes that men are the highest intelligent beings and there is room in the universe for more things than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

With our coarse senses we may not "hear the sound of silver wings slow beating through the hush of night," but we know not how close they may come and what unseen service they may render us.

The word angel means messenger, and God has many of these that we may not think of as angels

The physician is his minister, and the mother that cares for you is as truly an angel as though she wore wings.

Every one that touches us with a helpful hand is an angel of the Lord to us, though we may not know it.

The angel did not do everything for Peter, but gave him many things to do himself.

He arose and girded himself and put on his shoes and drew his garment around himself and followed.

Peter was thus given a part in his release, and had he refused to do this he would have been left in prison.

Others can help us only as we help ourselves.

The physician can cure us only as we follow his directions, the mother can train us only as we submit to her discipline, and the Lord can lead us out of the prison of sin into liberty only as we arise and put on his righteousness and follow him.

3. An Iron and a Wooden Gate

In his passage from prison to liberty Peter passed through two gates that are typical of gates that stand across every human path.

One was an iron gate which he could not open, which he did not try to open, and which was opened for him by a supernatural hand.

The other was a wooden gate at the home of Mary which he could have some part in opening as he knocked upon it.

These two gates are ever before us, the iron gate of divine sovereignty which only God can open for us, and the wooden gate of human action which we must open for ourselves.

The one is found in those things that are wholly beyond our control, such as our birth and hereditary constitution, the course of nature, iron circumstances that we cannot break or bend, and the door of death.

The other is found in doors that we can open, such as conversion, education, service and destiny.

Our natural birth is an iron gate that God opens, but our spiritual birth is a golden gate that is left for us to knock on ourselves.

We were given nothing to say as to where we would start in life, but we are given everything to say as to where we shall go.

Some gates fly open or stay shut as we approach them and no power or effort of ours can swing them one way or the other, and other gates wait for us and open only at our knock.

The secret of peace is to know God's iron gate when we see it and let it alone; and the secret of success is to find the wooden gates of life and knock upon them until they open.

4. Party-Way Guidance

The angel led Peter through one street and then vanished and Peter was left alone to find his own way. Why did not the angel go with him all the way and open every gate?

Because God does some things for us and then leaves for us other things which he has given us power to do ourselves. Every iron gate which we cannot move he will open, but every wooden gate which we can unlock he will let and require us to open.

This is not our burden and bondage, but our dignity and liberty. God has made us co-workers with himself.

The child must not always hold to its mother's hand and too much guidance would not be good for us.

Jesus at his ascension led his disciples out "as far as to Bethany," and then let them find their own way and his followers have been doing this ever since.

Providence always sets up a few signboards for us and then lets us discover the rest of the way.

But the humble obedient soul will find a plain path and never get lost.

During his deliverance Peter was as one half awake, or in a dream or vision, and was not fully aware of his divine release. But when he

"was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth, that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the Jews."

At first his vision was indistinct and his judgment confused so that he could not see the Lord's hand upon him.

But when he came to himself and was in the full and clear possession of his faculties he saw the divinity that shaped his ends.

This is often our experience.

While we are passing through an experience we may not be aware of its deepest meaning and may be blind to the Providence that is leading us, but afterwards when we look back upon it in calm reflection we know of a truth that the Lord hath delivered us and that his goodness and mercy have followed us.

5. An Unexpected Answer to Prayer

When Peter found himself thrown upon his own resources he "considered the thing." He did not rush forward blindly, but he reflected and concentrated his judgment on the best course to pursue.

The habit of considering is one of the guides and safeguards of life.

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

Having considered, Peter did not fly from the Jews and Herod, but he came to the house of Mary the mother of Mark, where many were assembled praying.

He went back to the believers, he returned to the old nest, he went to prayer meeting.

Where a man goes shows what he is; he instinctively goes to his own kind and at last every one shall go to his own place.

Peter's knock at the door was answered by a maiden named Rose, who reported to the praying company that Peter stood outside.

The announcement was received with impatient incredulity.

The maid was declared to be mad, she was called a fool to her face for believing such a thing.

But, like the restored blind man that knew he saw in spite of all denials of the plain fact, she knew what she had heard and stuck to her story.

Then they began to spin theories to explain the matter.

"It is his angel," they said. They hit on everything except the simple truth that it was Peter himself delivered in answer to their prayers.

They were in the very act of praying for his deliverance and now they would not believe the answer to their own prayer.

Their incredulity is almost comical, but not more so than much of our unbelief and blindness that we frequently display and cherish.

Men are ingenious in framing theories to account for the world and hit upon almost every explanation except the fact that God made it. Some one has said that whenever men find out how a thing was done, their first conclusion is that God did not do it.

However it was done as regards the means, God was in the process and the result is his own plan and action.

Our own prayers often contain so much unbelief that a direct answer to them might cause us to doubt our own senses.

The unbelief of the believers, however, had to give way before the knocks of Peter who kept pounding away on the gate: he was no angel but solid flesh and blood.

Presently he was admitted and they were astonished.

The answer to their prayer exceeded their utmost faith and expectation, and when our prayers are finally answered our unbelief shall turn to astonishment and then shall our mouth be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.

The excitement was so great that it almost broke up the prayer meeting and Peter had to quiet them down with a gesture.

Then he told the story of his divine deliverance and bade them go and tell James, the brother of the Lord, and the brethren.

The good news of the gospel is never to be kept as our private possession and experience but is to be told abroad that others may hear and share the same blessing.

Peter's work in Jerusalem was now done, and the brave fisherman-preacher passes from these pages. Paul mentions meeting him later at Antioch and we have two letters from his hand, but where he labored and where and how he came to his death we do not know.

But we are confident he continued steadfast in the faith and bore witness to his Lord even unto the end.

Suggestive Questions and topics

1. Name the outstanding points in the character of Peter.
2. Are Christians now anywhere imprisoned for preaching the gospel?
3. What part do we ordinarily have in making our prayers come true?
4. Give other Scripture instances in which the answers exceeded the prayers.
5. Give some Scripture promises pledging answer to prayer. Why do we not trust these promises?

LESSON XII—JUNE 19

Peter Teaches Good Citizenship (Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: I Peter 2:11-17; 4:1-5

Golden Text: Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. ROMANS 13:10.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 146:5-10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Makes a Good Citizen?

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Character of a Good Citizen.

Lesson Text: I Peter 2:11-17; 4:1-5

11 Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;
12 Having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.
13 Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme;
14 Or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well.
15 For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:
16 As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God.
17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

1 Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;
2 That ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.
3 For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries:
4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:
5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. Abstinence and Good Behaviour.
2. Civic Duties.
3. Armed with the Mind of Christ.
4. Let Past Sins Suffice.
5. Account Shall Be Given.

Here we have a letter from Peter's own hand and he speaks to us directly.

The letter was written from Babylon (5:13), which is plainly Rome, to the Jewish Christians of Asia Minor (1:1).

Peter's general purpose was to strengthen the Christians in view of present and impending trials.

The mighty volcano of Rome was beginning to rumble and breathe forth smoke and fire and the frightful explosion of the Neronian persecution was near.

A nameless sense of danger and dread filled the Christian world.

Christians were being disengaged from Jews in the public mind as a separate and more hateful sect. Every crime was charged upon them and only a match was needed to set the world on fire against them.

Peter wrote to inspire them with calmness and courage and with a sense of the splendid glorification of suffering.

1. Abstinence and Good Behaviour

Peter beseeches his readers "as sojourners and pilgrims," as indeed they were in that hostile empire and as we all are in passing through this temporary world.

Abstinence from fleshly lusts which war against the soul was his first injunction.

They were living in a time when fleshly lusts were unloosing all the bonds of decency and reveling in sensuality and shameless vice. These Christians were to keep themselves unspotted from such vileness and walk in white.

Abstinence is a law of life that is still necessary in our time.

It is that self-control by which we give up some things in order that we may get other things. We cannot have all things that we might desire and so we must pick and choose. Often must we sacrifice one thing that we may have another thing.

Sometimes we must give up the good that we may get the better and then sacrifice the better that we may have the best.

Fleshly lusts may exercise a powerful attraction and spell over us, but they are like so many knives that cut into and slash all the tissues of life, physical and mental and spiritual.

They may at first add effervescent ingredients to the cup of life and make it sparkle and foam, but at the bottom of the poisoned cup are bitter dregs and death.

If, then, we want life that is pure and sweet and will always refresh us we must keep fleshly lusts out of it.

Intoxicating drink in all its forms is so much poison and death in our cup and total abstinence is the only safe attitude and rule to enforce against it.

Abstinence is a negative virtue, and Peter next urges the positive virtue of good behaviour among the Gentiles.

They were under the surveillance of their pagan neighbors and would easily excite their suspicion and unfriendliness and it became them to be specially circumspect in their manner of life.

These Gentiles were ready to suspect and charge the Christians with all manner of evil doings, even with unspeakable crimes, and they were to keep themselves above suspicion and live lives of such open innocence and goodness that their neighbors would be impressed by their good works and "glorify God in the day of visitation."

These living gospels that manifest their own genuineness and spiritual worth are still the need of the world and in fact they are the only gospel that will cure corruption as the salt and dissipate darkness as the light of the world.

2. Civic Duties

Peter passes on to the civic duties of his readers.

He enjoins good citizenship at every point.

They were to be subject to every ordinance of man, keeping all the laws, for the Lord's sake or as a form of loyalty to him, making politics a part of piety. This loyalty to authority was to extend to all powers from the Emperor on his throne to the provincial governor and the local mayor or policeman.

As good citizens they were to put to silence the noisy ignorance or demagoguery of foolish men; and while exercising their own freedom under the law, they were not to use it as a cloak for wickedness.

He condenses the civic and social duties of the time into the admirable summary: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

When we remember the kind of government under which these early Christians were living, despotic and oppressive and generally corrupt, and especially how it was dealing with them, these civic admonitions are remarkable in their unstinted loyalty.

These same admonitions are specially applicable to us Americans at this time.

We have an immeasurably better government than had the early Christians and we are generally loyal to it.

But at present there is passing over our country a wave of lawlessness and, deeper still, of disloyalty to law, that is an ominous symptom of the state of our body politic.

America now leads the world in crime, more murders being committed annually in New York or Chicago than in all England.

Especially symptomatic is the prevailing disposition to assume an attitude of disloyalty to legislation that is not personally liked, such as the Volstead law and the Eighteenth Amendment.

Men in high places are openly showing their disrespect and practical disregard of these laws and thereby undermining loyalty to all law.

It is time that we Americans return to Peter's teaching and practice under very much more adverse circumstances than ours, "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."

3. Armed with the Mind of Christ

At this point as at all others Christ is our great example.

He suffered in the flesh and experienced that deeper, sharper suffering that cuts down through the flesh into the spirit.

All God's waves and billows rolled over him. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet he opened not his mouth.

His masterful faith and perfect patience carried him through all his sufferings in triumph.

"Arm yourselves also with the same mind," says Peter.

The mind of Christ is the whole armor of God that panoplies the soul in invincible might.

This mind within us manifests itself outwardly in faith and faithfulness that enable us to resist the fiery darts of suffering with patience and peace.

We can arm ourselves with this mind by growing into union with him until his mind is in us and we live, and yet not we, but Christ liveth in us.

Through suffering we may be purified from sin.

Suffering in itself does not sanctify, but may only deaden and embitter the heart in sin. Pharaoh cried out under the lash of God's plagues and promised obedience, yet he did not repent but only hardened his heart.

Suffering, however, that is submissively received and patiently endured has a strange power of purging us of earthliness; it abates passion and pride and tempers the mind and heart into patience and peace.

Some of the purest and most beautiful saints have been those that have passed through intense fires of trial, and Jesus himself was made perfect through sufferings.

4. Let Past Sins Suffice

Peter next takes a glance at the past life of his Christian readers and tells them that they have had enough of that kind of thing.

He gives a slimy catalogue of their former immoral practices and puts at the bottom as the deepest depth of their degradation their "abominable idolatries"; for religion, the best thing in the world, when perverted and prostituted, becomes the worst thing, the lowest pit into which iniquity sinks.

"The time past may suffice to have wrought" these things, said Peter.

He did not mean to imply, of course, that these things were right and good at any time, however short, for there is no time or place in the universe where such things can be rightfully tolerated even for a moment. Any time thus spent is misspent, and one hour of such living is enough and more than enough by just that one hour. But having passed through sin we may well look back upon it with sorrow and disgust and say, "We have had enough of that." We have surely had enough of the world's vanity and deceit, its outer show and sham and its inner emptiness and vexation of spirit; we have had enough of our own pride and passion and selfishness: give us something better, more solid and satisfying.

The sinner himself, when he comes to eat of the bitter fruit of his own doings will surely cry, Enough!

But it may then be too late forever.

Only righteousness will last and forever satisfy, and of the fruits of the Spirit we cannot have too much.

The former pagan associates of these Christian converts "think it strange," says Peter to them, "that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot with them, speaking evil of you."

Wicked people like to have companions in their wickedness and will turn in hatred against those that leave them. "The same excess of riot" becomes their standard of judgment and they speak evil of those that follow a better life.

The line between the church and the world is not so broadly marked among us as it was in these pagan times, but we must still

come out and keep ourselves unspotted, though others may think it strange that we no longer go with them, and speak evil of us.

5. Account Shall Be Given

Over against this list of iniquities and this spirit of persecution is set the fact of judgment. The wicked may run their own evil way, but they shall "give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead."

"Shall give account" is the fact and fate that confronts us in all the affairs of life.

We are not doing business at loose ends in this world, but accounts are kept and at last the books must balance. Nothing is forgotten and every thing shall turn up for us or against us.

Not only shall the supreme decisions and the broad aspects of life be brought into judgment, but for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof."

As the tree pours its peculiar life into every leaf, so character distills a drop of its moral essence into every spoken word; and as gravitation holds the planet in its grip by grasping every atom of its mass, so judgment will bring all life to an account by penetrating to its minutest details and not letting one syllable slip.

This judgment is not simply a far-off possibility, but is a present reality.

Every day is a day of judgment and writes its verdict in deeds done and character crystallized.

Yet present judgment does not exhaust the demands of justice and a great day of final judgment shoots its red flames up against the future.

This fact of judgment is a powerful restraint against sin.

The web of the world would fall to pieces of its own rottenness if this iron thread were pulled from its woof. Sin would consume the

moral universe to ashes if it were not hemmed around and shut in with granitic walls of judgment.

It is a comfort to the righteous that the wicked shall give account of all the vileness they practice and all the evil they speak against the good; and the fear of judgment should put a powerful constraint upon us to keep us from sin and should arm us to suffer all manner of hardship and persecution, rather than touch uncleanness that will at last expose us to the fires of judgment.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why should we pledge ourselves to and practice total abstinence in the use of intoxicating drink?
2. What can we do to promote better citizenship?
3. How can we acquire the mind of Christ?
4. Can we wholly throw off our past?
5. What is the relation of civil law and judgment to the divine government?

LESSON XIII—JUNE 26

Review: Life and Letters of Peter

Golden Text: Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men. MATTHEW 4:19.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:6-13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Peter as a Leader.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Peter's Life and Work.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Peter's Entrance on His Discipleship.***
2. ***Three Critical Experiences of Peter.***
3. ***Peter's Entrance on His Apostleship.***
4. ***Closing Scenes.***

We have followed Peter from his call to discipleship under Jesus through the varied scenes of his checkered career to the point where he passes from our view, and we can now gather up these scenes into a composite picture or portrait.

1. Peter's Entrance on His Discipleship

Peter entered upon his discipleship in response to the personal call of Jesus as is described in Lesson I. Jesus was in Galilee opening his ministry by preaching repentance, literally calling to his hearers, Change your mind.

This is the point where all must enter the Christian life and it is an act of mind and will that is within our power.

It takes a sufficient motive, however, to enable us to change our mind and this is given us in the great reason, "The kingdom of God is at hand."

Jesus came upon Peter and his brother Andrew fishing in the lake and called upon them to follow him, saying he would make them fishers of men.

Fishing is a fine art and many of its points apply to luring men into the discipleship of Christ.

Peter in accordance with his impulsive nature lost no time in responding to the call of Jesus and "straightway" left his nets and followed him.

The scene suddenly changes from the seashore to the synagogue and then from the synagogue to Peter's home where Jesus healed Peter's wife's mother, showing that wherever he and his disciples go, there should be a change for the better, both in people and in their circumstances.

Peter's weakness was his impulsiveness often leading him into rashness and he is next taught a lesson of trust in Lesson II.

The disciples were crossing the lake when they were caught in a storm and were greatly frightened, seasoned boatmen though they were. Jesus came to them walking on the water, calling out to them, "Be not afraid."

Peter in his boldness asked that he might be permitted to come to Jesus on the water and when Jesus said, "Come," he stepped down upon the sea and was soon sinking and cried out to Jesus for deliverance.

Jesus gave him his hand and rebuked him for his feeble faith.

The deepest lesson we can learn in any storm is that God is in it and we should trust him to care for us even when all his waves and billows go over us.

The ministry of Jesus in Galilee was closing and the end of his work was approaching when he took his disciples up into a solitude in the north to try out their faith and make to them the fateful revelation of his coming death, as described in Lesson III.

The critical question he asked them was, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" and then he pressed it upon them in the pointed personal form.

Peter gave the great answer that has stood to this day.

Jesus then disclosed his approaching death and Peter made one of the worst blunders of his life in declaring that such a tragic death should not be, and received from his Master a fitting rebuke.

2. *Three Critical Experiences of Peter*

Peter was one of the three chosen disciples present at the Transfiguration of Jesus described in Lesson IV.

They climbed the mountain and while engaged in prayer Jesus became steeped in splendor and two heavenly visitors appeared.

Peter wanted to build booths and stay there, but this was not permitted and would not have been best.

The cloud and the voice were significant symbols, the one concealing and the other revealing God.

Soon the splendor faded and they returned to the plain, Jesus bidding the disciples to tell no man.

The transfiguration is one of the great scenes of the Bible, worthy of a mountain setting, as it disclosed the hidden divinity and glory of Jesus and prepared him and his disciples for the coming night of the cross.

The glory of the transfiguration was followed by the shame of Peter when he denied his Lord at the trial of Jesus as told in Lesson V.

Peter's trouble began on this occasion by his following Jesus afar off on the way to the trial, and then he joined in with the unfriendly company around the fire as though he were one of them.

When detected and exposed, he brazenly denied that he was a follower of Jesus and swore that he did not know him.

However when Jesus looked with pitying eyes on Peter, he repented, going out and weeping bitterly.

He changed his mind; that was the good point in Peter: often as he would fall he would rise in repentance and make a new start.

The third critical experience of Peter in these lessons was his presence at the tomb of the risen Lord described in Lesson VI.

The women found this tomb empty, which is its glory, and when Peter and John heard the news they ran to investigate.

John stopped at the mouth of the tomb but Peter passed on in and then John followed him, a fine instance of unconscious influence.

We next find Peter with the other disciples with the risen Lord on the shore of lake Galilee, where occurred the touching interview between Peter and Jesus. Peter well knew the matter of his denial had not been fully cleared up and Jesus probed his conscience to the quick on this point.

Peter shows up well, excusing nothing in his conduct and declaring in the spirit of humility his devotion to his Lord.

He was now steadfast in his faith and never again do we find him falling from grace.

3. Peter's Entrance on His Apostleship

The Master is gone, and now the disciples begin their work as apostles Peter the fisherman turns out at Pentecost to be a great preacher as we see in Lesson VII.

The people were amazed at the manifestation of the Spirit and Peter seized the occasion to show that the outpouring was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

So powerfully did he press his message home that the unbelieving Jews were pricked in their hearts and began to cry out what they must do.

Peter was ready for this cry, as the gospel always is, and gave an answer that exactly met the point.

Three thousand souls were converted the first day, twenty-five converts for every church member, and if we maintained this ratio today how swiftly would the gospel encircle the globe and the kingdom of God come.

We next find Peter healing a lame beggar on the temple steps as told in Lesson VIII.

The crippled and the poor have always crept up to the church and this is a testimony to the good it does.

Peter gazed on the beggar sympathetically, and we must learn this secret of sympathy if we are going to help people. Silver and gold had the preacher none, but he had something infinitely better and when he put the lame beggar on his feet he gave him, not money, but the power of making money.

The gospel of self-help is the best help, and this is the help the gospel of Christ gives.

We next find Peter in jail and he went there so often that he became used to it.

He was released to go on with his preaching as we see in Lesson IX.

He and the other apostles made a great utterance to the priests when they declared, "We must obey God rather than men."

Gamaliel plays an important part in this case, pleading for delay on the ground that they might be found fighting against God.

His counsel prevailed, and the apostles were freed and went on with their preaching. Such men cannot be stopped and their preaching is going on to this day.

4. Closing Scenes

We next come to an epoch in Peter's life when he passed through a revolutionary experience with Gentiles as described in Lesson X.

All his traditional thought and habit had been that the Gentiles were excluded from the pale of the divine favor as expressed in Judaism and then in Christianity.

A vision symbolized to him the broader truth and when brought into the presence of Cornelius, a Roman officer with his household, he was astonished to find that God is no such respecter of persons as he had supposed and that righteous men in every nation are acceptable to him.

Instantly his whole attitude towards Gentiles was reversed and the course of his life was henceforth thrown into the broad channel of God's universal grace.

He could not withhold baptism and thus the first Gentile convert was received into the Christian church, a forerunner and first fruits of multitudes who have since entered and are now entering through the same door.

In Lesson XI we find Peter in jail again. The church met and engaged in prayer for his deliverance, and then would not believe in the answer to their prayer when Peter stood pounding on their very door.

They were not alone in their incredulity and we could easily match it out of our own experience.

If we had more faith and fervency in our prayers we would see more answers and not be surprised at them.

We finally have in Lesson XII a leaf out of one of the two letters Peter wrote and left as a rich legacy to us.

He advises abstinence from the lusts of the flesh, a prevailing form of sin in his day. But the same sins still prevail among us and they are just as deadly today as they were then.

The only safe course and habit with reference to such sins and to all sins is to cut them out absolutely.

This rule applies with special cogency and warning to the sin of intoxication, against which we must still make war.

Peter was a politician in the highest sense that he enjoined civic duties as a form of loyalty to the Lord.

Abstinence is a negative virtue but Christian character is also positive, running out in the form of good behaviour into all the relations of life.

Civic duty requires us as Christians to take our religion into our politics and not only keep the laws but also to make right laws and especially to respect all law.

The great safeguard against sin is the mind of Christ which is at once our inner and our outer armor that will keep us strong in the Lord and in the courage of his might.

We have followed Peter and seen him grow from the beginning of his Christian life to its strong and fruitful close.

He had his faults and falls, but he always repented and made things right and got right with his Lord and his God. He was an impulsive man, fervent and fiery, emotional and at times easily moved to the point of rashness, but such men are needed in the church and in the world.

They do not always stop to think and may be too quick to act, but they are earnest and progressive and keep the world forward moving.

They are dynamic rather static, and without such men the world would go slow and might stop.

We like Peter in spite of his faults. His Lord loved him too and was very patient with him.

Would that we had more of his kind.

He made mistakes and at times blundered badly, but the greatest blunder is to make no mistake at all because nothing is attempted or done.

We part with Peter with increased love for him and we should follow him as he followed Christ.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an outline of Peter's life.
2. What were his strong points?
3. What were his weak points?
4. Give an account of his First Epistle.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD QUARTER

"History," said the English historian Freeman, "is past politics, and politics is present history."

We step from the New Testament into the Old in this Quarter just in time to see politics begin in an organized way.

Hitherto the Hebrews had been tribes only loosely held together, whether they were wandering in the wilderness or were settled in Caanan.

But now they partly drifted and were partly forced into closer unity.

Increasing settled life and civilization necessarily drew them together and made them more interdependent. Common ideas and ideals were working at the basis of their growing life.

The theocracy was a high ideal, but it turned out to be too high for their low realities and practical conditions.

The monarchy bound them into political union for a time, but only for a time and presently they fell apart into a northern and a southern kingdom. No system of government worked with them smoothly and lasted because of their human nature and clashing interests.

The fact is that even a bad form of government will work well with good people, but the best form of government will not work well with bad people.

If the soil and the seeds are good the harvest will be good in spite of poor agricultural machinery and methods.

Great leaders make nations and shape history and it was eminently so with these early Hebrews.

They were yet in the childhood of their race and nation and were easily led about by dominating personalities. In these lessons we have a succession of such leaders in Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon, this great line degenerating to a low point in Rehoboam.

This whole history as past politics admits of being translated into and applied to present history.

Across all these centuries human nature remains the same and the principles and workings of politics often bear striking resemblances however different the outward form of the social fabric.

We should study these persons and events with an eye to our own time and especially to our personal and national duties.

THIRD QUARTER

Early Kings and Prophets of Israel
FROM SAMUEL TO ISAIAH
(First Half of a Six Months' Course)

Aim: To promote personal and national righteousness by a study of Israel's early kings and prophets.

LESSON I—JULY 3
Saul Chosen King

Lesson: I Samuel 10:17-25; 11:12-15

Golden Text: What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Calls to Life Service.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Opportunities for Leadership.

Lesson Text: I Samuel 10:17-25; 11:12-15

17 And Samuel called the people together unto Jehovah to Mizpah;
18 And he said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you:
19 But ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before Jehovah by your tribes, and by your thousands.
20 So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken.
21 And he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by their families; and the family of the Matrites was taken; and Saul the son of Kish was taken: but when they sought him, he could not be found.
22 Therefore they asked of Jehovah further, Is there yet a man to come hither? And Jehovah answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage.
23 And they ran and fetched him thence; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.
24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people. And all the people shouted, and said, *Long* live the king.
25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Jehovah. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

12 And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.
13 And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day; for today Jehovah hath wrought deliverance in Israel.
14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.
15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before Jehovah in Gilgal; and there they offered sacrifices of peace-offerings before Jehovah; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A National Assembly.*
2. *Saul Selected.*
3. *Every Inch a King.*
4. *A Written Constitution.*
5. *A Magnanimous King.*

The Hebrews, in common with all Semitic peoples were weak in unifying political genius. The centrifugal was constantly tending to overbalance the centripetal force in their political organization.

This disintegration soon divided their monarchy and has finally scattered them all over the world.

The monarchy, while it grew out of religious unfaithfulness, yet grew out of existing conditions and was a practical necessity.

The preliminary steps that led to the selection of a king are an interesting study. The elders or representatives of the people made known to Samuel that, as he was old and his sons were bad, a king was desired.

This was a crushing blow to the aged prophet, but he accepted it submissively and consulted the Lord.

A king was granted them as a concession to human infirmity. Samuel advised the elders of the cost and burdens of a kingdom, and sent them all home until a king could be found.

Saul, a young Benjamite, set out to find his father's lost asses and found a king's crown.

Under the divine direction, Samuel anointed him privately as king, and thus prepared the way for this public inauguration.

1. A National Assembly

This great affair of state was celebrated at a national assembly at Mizpah.

Samuel opened the assembly with an address to the people, in which he set before them in broad contrast what God had done for them and what they were doing towards God.

As usual in such addresses, the great deliverance from Egypt was lifted up as the mighty background on which were depicted the mercy and faithfulness of Jehovah.

That epochal event was now upwards of four centuries behind them, but its mountain peak was still visible and ever cast its shadow down upon them.

Only an allusion to it was needed to call it up vividly, and the prophets used it for many generations to stir the national consciousness with a sense of God's faithfulness.

Upon this impressive background Samuel projected the sin of the people.

In startling contrast with God's faithfulness stood their unfilial and rebellious unfaithfulness. In demanding a king they were rejecting God.

They were not able to conduct their affairs without a human king because they had not been loyal to their divine King.

Our sins are ever projected black and ugly upon the white background of God's mercy. When our secret sins are set in the light of his countenance their true guilt and dark repulsiveness are seen.

Back of us stand many monuments of God's mercy, and his goodness is ever leaving us without excuse.

When we resort to forbidden means of success we are rejecting God.

"Now therefore present yourselves before Jehovah." A strange "therefore" is this. They were rejecting God in asking a king, and therefore their petition was granted.

This discloses a deep principle in divine providence. God accommodates himself to human weakness.

Their asking for a king was not an essential sin, like telling a lie, in which case God never could have entered into any complicity with it, but it was only falling below the highest ideal; and God adapted his providence to this weakness and granted the petition.

God has to work with human nature as it is, and this is a principle that must often enter into our work.

If we cannot get the ideal conditions and results, it is folly for us not to work at all.

We must often take things as they are and work out a lower good when we cannot attain a higher. A human king is better than no king.

2. *Saul Selected*

The election now took place by lot, falling first upon the tribe of Benjamin and then upon the family of the Matrites and finally upon Saul the son of Kish.

This was the customary and legal mode of holding an election among the Israelites and was taken as indicating the divine will.

The method was impartial and the election was fairly held. There was no machine nomination and no election frauds. The lot was cast publicly and the result accepted as the election of God.

Our methods of election leave more room for dishonesty and therefore have greater need of honesty in their administration.

An honest election, whether in church or state, is a foundation stone of government.

Saul was elected, but when they sought him he could not be found.

He had had premonitions of the coming honor in Samuel's anointing oil, but he was not putting himself forward and lifting himself up so that the lightning could strike him.

It is true there was no way he could seek an election by lot, but his modest behaviour, in such striking contract with what we are familiar with in our political electioneering, shows he was not pushing himself into the place.

The people did not know where to find their newly-chosen king, but the Lord knew and he always knows where to find a man when he wants him for a high place or for any place.

Saul was found among the stuff, possibly attending to his horses or other humble work.

Faithful service is always the best preparation for higher service. The man that crowds with good work the place he is in thereby makes himself a conspicuous candidate for election to a higher place.

And when he is needed he will be found. Stuff cannot hide the man that is wanted.

3. Every Inch a King

Saul was brought forth, and when he stood among the people his shoulders were on a level with their heads, and he towered above them so that he looked every inch a king. His massive size, symmetrical figure, rugged strength, modest air and manly bearing were "a combination and a form, indeed," which gave "assurance of a man."

Such a physical organization is a splendid equipment and is impressive in its suggestion of kingly power.

Yet the real size of a man cannot be measured with a tape line, nor his actual weight be determined on a pair of scales.

Napoleon was a small man physically, and yet what enormous power lay coiled up in his skull. A man's character is not weighed when he steps upon the scales, and yet this is the weightiest thing in him.

A man may bulk large in his flesh and yet show up small in his soul. Kingly majesty and might reside in the spirit and not in the flesh.

A large soul may inhabit a small body but its greatness will shine through.

When the people saw the youth on whom their choice had fallen they shouted, "Long live the king."

They admired his handsome form and magnetic personality and were carried away with enthusiastic loyalty.

This marked the moment of Saul's inauguration as king.

As he stands there so gifted and promising, with such splendid opportunities and prospects before him, he is the type of youth as it stands equipped with noble powers looking out upon life.

How often is the promise of youth blighted with folly and disaster, as it was in the life of Saul?

The greater are our powers and opportunities, the greater is our need of divine guidance that our feet may be kept from stumbling and our eyes from tears.

God has given us a King to reign over us, and of him it is indeed true that "there is none like him among all the people."

4. A Written Constitution

"Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Jehovah."

The new kingdom was not an absolute despotism but a constitutional monarchy. Its powers were limited and defined.

This is probably the first instance on record of a written constitution, a germ which has since developed into a political instrument of the first importance and of tremendous power in the modern world.

Our own country forged the first elaborate written constitution and set the pace for all modern democratic governments.

The Bible has been and is a great handbook of politics, and many of our best things in government have come out of it.

It is the duty of king and subject, officer and citizen, alike to know and obey "the manner of the kingdom," the law of the land.

Good citizenship is part of Christianity.

Whoever violates any law through transgression or corruption works against individual and social order and commits a crime against man and a sin against God.

It is the business of Christians as good citizens to see that the manner of the kingdom as written in the book of our statutes is just and wise, and that this manner is enforced.

The Kingdom of God is the only kingdom that has a perfect constitution.

The Word of God may be taken as the manner of this Kingdom written in a book, though its real constitution is the character and will of God as manifested in his Son.

All human constitutions shall shrivel up, the heavens shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the laws of this Kingdom shall fail.

In the keeping of this constitution there is life everlasting.

5. A Magnanimous King

The great national assembly was dissolved and every man went to his own home.

Public affairs rise into conspicuous prominence at times, but they are only a small part of our whole life, as the majestic mountains cover only a small portion of the continent.

Saul also went to his home, for the kingdom then was a simple affair and had not yet developed into the power and splendor of a court.

A band of consecrated young men went with Saul as his personal attendants and advisers.

The king himself is only one man, and it is only as others are banded together with him that he can rule.

The king is powerless without the subject, the husband is helpless without the wife, the capitalist can produce nothing without the laborer, the strongest needs the weakest, God needs man, and co-operation everywhere knits life into unity and strength.

There were not wanting, however, "certain worthless fellows" who said, "How shall this man rule over us?" They derided the new king and ridiculed his ability to rule.

No matter how the election goes, whether it be for a president or a pastor, some people will not be satisfied.

Perhaps the very ones that were loudest in demanding a king were the first and most vociferous in their denunciations.

It was a fine chance for the new king to show his power by putting his opponents down, but Saul knew better.

He had just established his reputation for prompt and masterly action in repelling an attack of the Ammonites and was now in a position to deal leniently with his enemies.

Minorities even when they are unreasonable should not be crushed, and opinion should be free in its expression though it grows abusive.

Great men must endure the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and show no sign of resentment.

It is only little men that strike back.
Saul let these sons of Belial talk, but he held his peace.

The people demanded of Samuel that these disloyal men be brought to trial and put to death. But Saul said, "There shall not a man be put to death this day; for today Jehovah hath wrought deliverance in Israel."

There speaks the strong man who first rules himself and thereby shows his right and power to rule over others.

He that is slow to anger is mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.

Samuel proposed to the people that they go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there, and this was done "before Jehovah in Gilgal; and there they offered sacrifices of peace-offerings before Jehovah."

This was the religious ceremony in connection with the inauguration of Saul and this quieted incipient dissatisfaction and rebellion and brought the whole affair to a happy termination.

"And there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly." The nation was unified and stood unanimous and solid in its strength and joy.

The way to deal with a divided nation or church or family is not for one side to put the other down by violence, but to win both sides over to some common ground of agreement and action and then all the people will rejoice.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Draw a parallel between the condition of the tribes of Israel and our American colonies before their union.
2. How do we elect our president and is our method in need of any modification?
3. What makes a manly man? and a womanly woman?
4. To what extent was the Hebrew monarchy democratic in spirit?
5. What are the advantages of a written constitution? Does England have one?
6. How can we acquire and exercise the grace of magnanimity?

LESSON II—JULY 10

Samuel's Farewell

Lesson: I Samuel 12:1-5, 19-25

Golden Text: Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth. PSALM 26:3.

Devotional Reading: Pslam 26:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Make a Clean Record.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Righteousness in Public Life.

Lesson Text: I Samuel 12:1-5, 19-25

1 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.
2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you; and I am old and gray-headed; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day.
3 Here I am: witness against me before Jehovah, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.
4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.
5 And he said unto them, Jehovah is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they said, He is witness.
19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto Jehovah thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.
20 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have indeed done all this evil; yet turn not aside from following Jehovah, but serve Jehovah with all your heart;
21 And turn ye not aside; for *then would ye go* after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.
22 For Jehovah will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased Jehovah to make you a people unto himself.
23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way.
24 Only fear Jehovah, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you.
25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Samuel's Defence of Himself.
2. The People Acknowledge Their Sin.

3. Consequences of National Sin.
4. A Gracious Response.
5. The Good and the Right Way.

The selection of Saul as king was followed by an attack of the Ammonites which gave the new king a chance to show his mettle. He rallied the men of Israel and hurled them against the invaders and crushed them and sent the scattered remnants flying back among their hills.

The victory instantly made Saul a hero.

Nothing succeeds like success, and the man that does things has no lack of followers and support.

Samuel saw that the hour of victory was an opportune time to renew the kingdom, and so he gathered the people together at Gilgal, where, as we have seen, Saul was again invested by a religious ceremony with the office of king.

The aged prophet then delivered his farewell address.

Washington's Farewell Address was a notable event in our history and still enters vitally in our national life.

This address of Samuel also struck deep notes that profoundly affected the life of the newly founded Hebrew monarchy.

1. Samuel's Defence of Himself

Samuel at the end of his long public life makes a defence of himself, his Apologia pro vita sua. He recounts the story of how he had yielded to the demand of Israel for a king and reminds them that they have now what they wanted.

As for himself, he has walked among them since his childhood and his life was to them an open book.

He boldly challenges any one to say a word against him or point to any wrong deed he has done. He has taken no one's ox or ass or "even a pair of shoes," as the Septuagint Version has it.

He invites the most searching scrutiny and calls upon the Lord himself to bear witness to his words.

"And they said, He is witness." His bold challenge met with the instant support of the people and his administration received a unanimous vote of approval and confidence.

Few are the public men, kings, prime ministers and presidents, who could successfully put through such a challenge and stand such pitiless publicity.

Samuel was not in the habit of boasting, but now that he was laying down the reins of office and was about to retire to private life for his few declining years, he was justified in vindicating his record and leaving it so clear that no future aspersions could be cast upon it.

There are times when men, especially public men, have a right to establish their integrity beyond the power of evil minded persons to bring it into doubt.

Paul did this in his defence before his enemies (Acts 22:1-21), and Jesus himself boldly challenged his opponents to convince him of sin (John 8:46).

2. The People Acknowledge Their Sin

Samuel proceeded to recount the oft-told story of their deliverance under Moses out of Egypt and then reminded them of their recent demand for a king, "when Jehovah your God was your king," and promised them that if they would fear Jehovah and serve him it would be well with them; but if they rebelled "then will the hand of Jehovah be against you."

This was pointed and pungent preaching, striking right into the sins of the people, and it takes a brave and strong public man to speak in this way, even when he is vacating his office.

Few are the public officials who do not smooth their words when addressing the people.

And the people also did an unusual thing on this occasion. They acknowledged their sin and besought their prophet to pray for them.

Whereupon "all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto Jehovah thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."

Seldom does history record the acknowledgement on the part of any nation that it has done wrong.

On the contrary on every page we find nations vindicating themselves and shouting out to the world that they are innocent.

It is always other nations that are to blame. Are we not now witnessing this very thing in connection with the responsibility for the Great War? What nation acknowledges that it bears the guilt of this infinite crime or even had any share in it?

They have all been blaming one another for it and not one of them has asked for the prayers of anybody that its guilt might be forgiven.

These Israelites were a small and rude people and their nation was a pitiful thing compared with our splendid empires and republics, but they stand above us when they said, "We have sinned" (verse 10).

Honest confession is as good for the soul of a nation as it is for an individual.

It would mark a new day in history if nations would begin to realize their corporate responsibility and guilt and acknowledge their sins.

A better spirit is coming over the European nations involved in the Great War and they are, in the persons of their prime ministers and other representative men, beginning to distribute the guilt of the war among all and not concentrate it on any one nation or ruler, and thereby to take some of it home to themselves.

3. Consequences of National Sin

These Israelites realized the consequences of their national sin: "that we die not." This is the necessary obverse side of the blessings of obedience and national righteousness.

If long rebellion and obedience reaped the same harvest, there would be no inducement to obey, all moral distinctions would fade out, and the universe would no longer be worthy of respect.

Rebellion must reap retribution and obedience reap blessing, or there is no difference between them that we need regard.

But God has put an eternal difference between right and wrong, and all the voices of his Word and of his world utter the testimony, Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with them. Say ye to the wicked, It shall be ill with them.

The same hand that is outstretched to receive the returning prodigal and is tender to bind up the broken hearted and mighty to save the lost, is just as strong to strike down the proud and rebellious soul.

All God's laws work for those that keep them and against those that disobey them, just as the same railway train carries those that ride on it in safety to their destination, and crushes those that stand on its track. His retribution is not a surprise that he springs on us, but it has been at work a long time in the world, and we need look no farther back than our fathers to see its sure working and bitter results.

The wages of sin is death to nations as well as to individuals.

History is a vast graveyard where are buried countless nations, many of them splendid world empires ruled by powerful kings, and yet because they forgot God they went into the dust of ruin and death.

The nations of today have no discharge from this law.

They have surely drunk deep of the cup of their own iniquity in the Great War and long will its disastrous consequences burden and plague them.

Our country, because it is so great and rich and strong, is in all the greater need of that righteousness which exalts a nation; and if it goes the way of selfishness and pride and pleasure, drawing around itself the cloak of its splendid isolation and taking its ease in luxurious living, it will fall, and great will be the fall of it.

4. A Gracious Response

The penitent cry of the people received a gracious response, "Fear not: ye have indeed done all this evil; yet turn not aisde from following Jehovah, but serve Jehovah with all your heart."

Fear not—how often is this kindly greeting and gracious assurance sounded out in the Bible.

It rings through the Old Testament, and it is almost the first word in the New.

The fear of the human soul is rooted in sin.

Its own heart condemns it, and it knows that God is greater than its heart.

But God is not an unjust judge or blind fate that hears not the cry of the penitent, but his heart is compassion and he will forgive and cleanse and save his erring children.

If we turn to him in faith and fellowship there is nothing in him that we need fear, but we shall find his loving kindness better than life.

Yet if we would not fear him we must not turn aside from following him.

If we go with him we shall find him all kindness and love, but if we go against him we shall find him a consuming fire.

The same heat melts wax and hardens clay; the same sunlight causes a living plant to bloom and withers a dead plant into dust.

The same love of God that bathes in blessing a loyal soul necessarily blights a soul that soaks itself in sin.

"Turn ye not aside," says the prophet again and again, for he knew how inclined the Israelites were to forsake Jehovah's way.

We need constantly to watch our ways and see that we turn not aside.

Many are the by-paths that lead off from the straight road and run into the wilderness and the ditch of sin, and there is only one way that runs straight ahead and never gets lost.

"For then would ye go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." When the Israelites turned away from the Lord, they turned to idols, which are "emptinesses" or nothings: they have in them no power or abiding reality at all.

Is this not equally true of the vain things we turn to when we turn away from the Lord?

Wealth, fashion, pleasure—what are these but nothings in the end? Scepticism, unbelief, agnosticism—are these anything substantial and satisfying to the soul? Arms and armaments, soldiers and guns and deadly gas—have not the nations tried these out long enough to find that they also are vain things?

What problem have they ever solved, what national or international question have they ever settled in the best way?

Before we turn away from God and his righteousness, let us consider what vain things we are going to try in their place. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

5. The Good and the Right Way

The prophet assured the people of Israel that Jehovah would not forsake them: "because it hath pleased Jehovah to make you a people unto himself."

All people are the Lord's, but they are not all his in the same sense: he has chosen some unto himself.

There are roots to this fact that we cannot reach, but the fact itself stands unshakable in God's Word and in his world.

Yet there is in this fact no just ground of cherishing a sense of superiority and pride in our attitude towards others, for this way lie danger and destruction, as the Jews themselves bear witness.

Because he has chosen his people unto himself, he will keep them and no man shall pluck them out of his hand.

The prophet also assures the people that he will not cease to pray for them.

It is worth something to have a good man pray for us: this gives us a standing in heaven that we might not otherwise attain; and the very consciousness that a saintly father or mother or pastor or teacher is praying for him has restrained many a wanderer and brought him home.

Let us not forget to pray for one another and thus bind ourselves to God with as many ties as possible.

The prophet would instruct the people in "the good and the right way."

Prayer must never be separated from instruction: we should pray for the right way and then we should try to find it through instruction. "The good and the right way"—these two things always go together: the good is always the right way, and the right is always the good way.

Once more the prophet admonishes the people to fear Jehovah and serve him with all the heart. They were a chosen people, but this would not save them from their sins.

We must not flatter ourselves that we are elect and then do wickedly, or we shall be consumed in our folly.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is it always necessary to defend one's self?
2. How does righteousness strengthen a nation?
3. How does personal and social injustice weaken a nation?
4. Can we know we are a chosen people of the Lord?
5. How can we find the good and the right way?

LESSON III—JULY 17

Samuel Anoints David

Lesson: I Samuel 16:4-13

Golden Text: Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. I TIMOTHY 4:12.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 3:1-6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why God Chose David.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Discovering Future Leaders.

Lesson Text: I Samuel 16:4-13

4 And Samuel did that which Jehovah spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him.

7 But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for *Jehovah seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this.

9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this.

10 And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Jehovah hath not chosen these.

11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. An Alarmed Prophet.

2. A Short-Sighted Judgment.

3. An Unexpected Selection.
4. Kingly Powers and Divine Influences.

Saul, in spite of all the promise of his youth, went the way of disobedience and divine rejection, and "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death."

This was a great blow to Samuel who mourned for Saul until Jehovah made to him the revelation, "I have provided me a king."

In rejecting Saul the Lord was not forgetting to look ahead and to take care of the consequences.

"I have rejected," and "I have provided" are thus the two sides of the Lord's providence, the two hands with which he works.

While with the one hand he was casting off Saul, with the other he was reaching after David.

All the losses that God permits to come upon us are compensated by greater gains.

While for a small moment he may forsake us, yet with great mercies he will gather us. With such a God working around us and ruling over us there is left small room for mourning and fear.

1. An Alarmed Prophet

Samuel received a commission to fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem to anoint a successor to Saul with some alarm.

Saul was now becoming a desperate character, and if he heard of Samuel's setting out on such an errand he would not hesitate to kill the prophet.

Samuel stated the hard situation to Jehovah and received directions how to slip through the danger in safety.

Danger is never to be courted, and we are to manage even our duties with such tact as will avoid unnecessary complications.

The prophet was to take a heifer with him to Bethlehem and announce that he was come to sacrifice, which would act as a cover to his deeper purpose and prevent any rumor reaching Saul.

This looks like a shrewd device, and so it was, but it was strictly true and involved no element of falsity; it was the truth, though not the whole truth.

We are not bound to disclose all our purposes.

Secrecy plays an important part in our life and covers a far greater portion than publicity exposes. Privacy is the rule, and publicity is the exception.

We may conceal much, but we may never conceal by falsehood; and the one thing we may not do is to tell a lie, which is the one thing that God himself cannot do.

Samuel was to proceed to Bethlehem, and there the Lord would show him what to do next. His duty was made plain up to a certain point, and when he had obeyed that far he would receive further directions.

This is a deep principle in divine providence that is frequently illustrated in the Scriptures, and it is thus that God is ever leading us on.

We should not ask to see the distant scene: one step ahead is enough.

Samuel was afraid to go to Bethlehem, and now the people of Bethlehem were afraid of Samuel. The shadow of Saul's jealousy and madness was over all the land, and everybody was afraid.

Bad rulers shake the foundations of society.

The people may also have feared the prophet's judgments.

But Samuel came peaceably, and he sanctified the people and called them to sacrifice.

The preacher and Christian must not come to excite fear or to stir up strife, but to call the people to worship and to pronounce upon them the peace of God.

2. A Short-sighted Judgment

After the sacrifice, Samuel partook of the customary feast with Jesse and his sons.

It had been revealed to Samuel before he came that one of these sons was to be anointed as king, and now the question on which great destinies trembled was, Which one?

The father presented the eldest son Eliab first, evidently thinking that he had the right to and the best chance for the great honor.

There stood the youth, tall and handsome, gifted and promising, and Samuel thought, "Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him."

Samuel had been captivated once before (10:24) by outward appearances, and now he seemed ready to repeat the blunder.

But Jehovah interposed with truer principles of judgment.

The son that the fond father and short-sighted prophet would have selected the Lord had refused, for he saw that he was not the man for the place.

Outward judgments of people very often stop at the surface and are based on form and features, dress and manners, wealth and position.

Such standards are scarcely skin deep and may totally miss the real man.

They often lead us into unjust and cruel judgments and into ridiculous mistakes. Outward appearances put many people into wrong places and are responsible for many misfits and failures.

God sees deeper and looks into the heart.

All the outward trappings and pageantry with which men put on appearances and cover up their real selves are transparent tissues before

the omniscient gaze of the Lord. He knows the real man, for he knows the heart.

Many a man that stands honored and envied among his fellowmen and is given an exalted position, is refused of the Lord as being inwardly poor and blind and naked.

We should build our lives of reality, so that we shall be the same from edge to edge and down through the center.

Our judgments of life are often superficial; they rest on the external and material and are concerned with food and dress and fashionable appearances, whereas life is more than meat and we have not reached its real substance until we have penetrated to its ethical core.

Life does not consist in the abundance of the things which we possess, but is measured along its inner spiritual edges.

We must beware that we do not judge ourselves by outward appearances, and we should seek truth in the inward parts.

3. An Unexpected Selection

Seven sons of Jesse passed before Samuel and each in turn was rejected. The future king was not among them and the situation was growing perplexing.

With evident concern Samuel asked, "Are here all thy children?" The father answered that there remained yet the youngest and that he was keeping the sheep.

Apparently the youngest boy was not invited to the feast, as not being a possible candidate for the honor, and was sent off to the fields to watch the flocks.

Nobody thought he had any chance, and he was put out of the way and forgotten.

Eliab was the man for the place and the boy David was not to be thought of: let him stay with the sheep.

But Samuel thought otherwise and must have startled the company as he said, "Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither." So the boy was brought in.

He was seen to be of ruddy complexion and had beautiful eyes, a handsome and attractive youth.

But Samuel was not now judging by appearances and had a surer voice to guide him. "And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

So the first was last, and the last first.

Men were all wrong in their judgments, and only the Lord knew the right man for the crown. The seekers after the place missed it and the one that never thought of it was called into it.

Many a boy is now a keeper of sheep that some day will be a king of men.

Ruling over sheep is good training for ruling over men; the lowest service prepares for the highest.

God looked into David's heart and saw in him kingly powers in the bud. God sees the possibilities that lie folded up in us and he will lead us into such service as will give these dormant powers an opportunity and call to wake into action.

Every soul has a kingdom in itself and is called to win a crown.

4. Kingly Powers and Divine Influences.

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward."

David had kingly powers in him, but it took divine influences to develop them.

The seeds are in the soil, but the rain must fall and the sun shine out of heaven upon them to make them grow. It takes two worlds to make a tree: the earth beneath and the heavens above.

It takes two worlds to build a man: earth and heaven, human and divine cooperation.

Whatever David attained in after years of noble character and disciplined power, whatever strength and splendor he gave to the kingdom of Israel, whatever psalms he wrote for the comfort and inspiration of the world, grew out of that native endowment quickened by the energizing power he received when the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him.

We may have in us rare gifts and possibilities, but they will come to naught unless we receive power from on high.

Here is the great cause of our weakness and barrenness. The seeds of human ability in us are not watered with divine grace, the roots of our lives are not saturated and enriched with the Holy Spirit, our lives are not hid with Christ in God.

The holy oil of consecration to the Lord must flow down over us, even to the skirts of our garments.

Every thought and imagination must be brought into subjection to his will, and then we shall begin to grow into his image and have kingly power from that day forward.

Why did God choose David?

Not for what he was but for what he might be. For his capacity for service when he would be developed into manhood and kinghood by self-control and obedience to his Lord. For his spirit of humility and willingness to serve wherever he was called, and for his courage that dared every danger for the sake of duty.

In every field of life today the leaders are often men that began low down in the humblest places of service and rose on the steps of deeds done to high station and responsibility.

Many of our Presidents have been men of this class; and men eminent in law and medicine and the ministry and in all the professions and most of the captains of industry have risen from the lowest ranks to high service and distinction.

Let our youth be diligent and faithful where they are and let promotion come to them as they are called.

How shall we discover future leaders?

The question is an important one, for on the leaders of the future will depend the future itself. We should provide educational and other

means so that our youth may have opportunities to prepare themselves for coming leadership.

We are likely to discover these future leaders not among those who are self-seekers, laying plans and plots to gain success and high station, but among those who are doing their best work where they are and are unconsciously training themselves for the call to higher service.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." (Prov. 22:29).

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What led to the failure of Saul?
2. Why are we so easily alarmed in the path of duty?
3. Should we be cautious in the presence of enemies?
4. Give instances of how young men have risen from humble places to great stations through faithful service.
5. How may we secure the endowment of the Spirit?
6. Should we be on the lookout among the young for future leaders, especially in Christian service?

LESSON IV—JULY 24

David and Goliath

Lesson: I Samuel 17:31-37, 40-42, 48-51

Golden Text: Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? PSALM 27:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 27:1-5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why David Was Not Afraid.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Victories of Faith.

Lesson Text: I Samuel 17:31-37, 40-42, 48-51

31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul; and he sent for him.
32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.
33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.
34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant was keeping his father's sheep; and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock,
35 I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.
36 Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.
37 And David said, Jehovah that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and Jehovah shall be with thee.

40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his wallet; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.
41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.
42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and withal of a fair countenance.

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.
49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead; and the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth.
50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.
51 Then David ran, and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *David in Saul's Armor*
2. *Five Smooth Stones*
3. *Blustering Goliath.*
4. *A Sure Shot.*
5. *A Giant's Head Cut Off.*

The shepherd boy was soon given a chance to show his kingly qualities. The Israelites and the Philistines were encamped against each other in the valley of Elah, about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

It was a widespread ancient custom for armies to stake the result of battle on the single combat of chosen champions.

Goliath came out from the camp of the Philistines as their representative.

He was a giant about nine and a half feet high (a not unparalleled human height), plated from head to foot with brass and presenting a formidable and fearful appearance as he loomed up so big and terrible and his polished armor glittered in the sun.

Day after day for forty days he came out and defied and terrified the Israelites.

At this juncture David arrived in the camp, sent by his father with provisions for his three brothers that were in the army.

He heard Goliath's challenge and began to inquire how it came that an "uncircumcised Philistine should defy the armies of the living God?"

Already he was looking deeper into the situation and saw that it was a contest of flesh against spirit and of man against God.

Eliab, his oldest brother whom his father thought should be chosen king, contemptuously reproved and taunted the lad, and David bore the insult with kingly self-control.

Report of David's speech reached Saul and the boy was called before the king.

David gave such a good account of himself that Saul chose him as his champion and sent him forth with the benediction, "Go, and Jehovah shall be with you."

1. David in Saul's Armor

Before sending him to the conflict the king equipped the boy in his own armor. The king's brass helmet and his coat of mail and sword were strapped on the lad and David was encased in metal like Goliath himself.

Saul thought that the only way to fight a giant was to use a giant's weapons.

With him it was a contest of flesh against flesh and of brass against brass.

He saw no room in the fight for the God of Israel.

Some people think they must fight the devil with the devil's own weapons.

They would meet deception with deceit, fraud with falsity, and every trick of Satan with a sharper trick. They see no room in society, business and politics, for principle and prayer, but only for brute force and brass.

The church itself sometimes thinks it must put on the world's weapons with which to overcome the world. In so doing it loses sight of God and resolves the contest into one of blood and iron.

David himself must have had a ludicrous sense of the ridiculousness of the proceeding. He tried to move around in the heavy armor and to flourish the great sword, but he found himself burdened and fettered with the weight of metal and he had no skill with the weapon.

He knew he would be no match for the giant in such armor, he had not proved them, and off they came.

We often covet the king's armor and think, if we only had it, what giants we would slay.

If we only had this man's wealth, or that man's position, how we would use it for the good of men and the glory of God.

But if such armor were suddenly thrust upon us, we might find ourselves hopelessly burdened and fettered.

No man can preach another man's sermon, or use another man's tools, or fill another man's position, and be at his best.

Many a one makes himself weak and cuts a ridiculous figure by trying to use another's weapons.
Imitation is falsity and weakness.

2. Five Smooth Stones

Off came the brass armor, and David again reached for his shepherd's staff and picked up his sling and selected five smooth stones out of the brook, and then he was ready for the giant.

The boy knew these weapons, for he had long proved them and could sling a stone to within a hair's breadth.

The king may have thought these simple rude weapons were foolish and absurd for such a conflict, but David knew what he could do with them.

We may think that we can win no victories because we have no polished brass armor and glittering steel blade, but only such simple weapons as our narrow circumstances and poverty will let us pick up.

This is what Moses thought of his power of speech when God commanded him to go and speak to Pharaoh: "Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, for I am slow of speech."

This is what the disciples thought of their few loaves and fishes when Jesus told them to feed the five thousand.

This is what we often think of our means when we are given a work to do: if we had money, or education, or opportunity, we could kill giants, but with our rude weapons we have no chance.

Yet it is not the means but the power behind the means that does the work.

Give Samson only the jawbone of an ass and with it he will slay a thousand Philistines. Give the chemist only scum and dross and out of them he will extract the finest perfumes and the most beautiful colors. Give the poet the rudest pen and with it he will write musical lines and fairy dreams.

The teacher says he would teach better if he had a better class; the minister thinks he would preach better if he had a better church; we are all thinking we would do better work if we had better means, higher positions, costlier weapons and showier accoutrements; and in all these thoughts we are mistaken.

What we need is not better means, but better skill in using the means we have.

A stone picked up at our feet will slay a giant if we only learn to throw it with unerring aim.

Every one has in his hand a weapon which, if he will only prove it, will go crashing through the skull of the hugest Goliath that comes blustering out against us.

A man's own powers, properly developed and skilfully used, are his best weapons and by divine grace will win victories.

3. Blustering Goliath

Between the assembled armies in the great arena of the valley the chosen champions now approached each other for the combat.

As they drew near the contrast between them became conspicuous and must have excited the derision of the Philistines and the alarm of the Israelites.

After the manner of modern pugilists, they opened the battle with a war of words. When the giant caught sight of the boy, he considered

such an antagonist an insult and burst into a passion of rage and profanity.

He wanted to know if David thought he was a dog to be hit with a staff or a stone, and he cursed him and told him to come on and he would give his flesh to the birds and beasts.

It was with such blustering self-confidence and big talk that Goliath opened the fight. He thought his mere bulk and brass would crush the boy.

Sin has a strong self-blinding effect upon human judgment and is much given to great swelling words of boasting.

We should not let such talk alarm us, but keep cool and be ready for the critical moment; and let not him that girdeth on his armor boast as he that putteth it off.

It is a mistake for us to despise an enemy because he seems insignificant.

The big armored battleship must not disdain the little torpedo boat or invisible submarine.

We may boast our ability to conquer a temptation because it seems a little sin, and yet it may strike us in a vital part.

David also had a speech to make, but it was of a different tone. His weapon was not a sword or spear but the name of the Lord of hosts.

With him it was a religious fight and he was simply a soldier of the Lord.

This faith inspired him with courage and coolness and assured him of victory. Against blustering brag and brass, David put simple trust in God.

All our battles should be a holy warfare in which God is with us. Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual, we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual hosts of wickedness, and in this conflict we should have on the whole armor of God.

4. A Sure Shot

The combatants now started towards each other and the fight was on.

As David ran towards Goliath he put a stone in his sling and, swinging it around, let it slip and sent it like a bullet to its mark.

The missile went crashing into the Philistine's forehead and the mountain of flesh came tumbling down. The ponderous metal-encased giant had no chance with such an antagonist and received his death-wound before he could strike a blow.

David was as one armed with a rifle against one armed with a sword. It was a contest of a bullet against a bludgeon and of brain against brass.

If the giant had ever got to the shepherd boy he would have made short with him, but the boy felled him at long range.

This is a point for us. We must kill our giants at long range before they come upon us.

The time to bring down intemperance and theft is when they are far off; if they are ever permitted to grapple with us at close quarters they may overpower us.

The missiles we are to hurl at giants are righteous thoughts, strong resolutions and holy prayers.

The word of God is full of these and, putting them into the sling of the will, we can hurl them straight as bullets to their mark.

David had slung many a stone and hit many a mark before his unerring aim crushed the giant's skull.

If we will learn by patient practice to handle the commands and promises of God, there is no giant of evil so huge and heavily armed but that, long before he reaches us, we can bring him tumbling down.

5. *A Giant's Head Cut Off*

David had won his victory, but one act more was needed to make it sure.

The giant was fallen, but perhaps he was not finished; he was down but not dead.

David would run no risk on this point. He wanted never to be troubled with Goliath again, and he would leave no possibility of his restoration. A stunned giant may get up again and renew the attack, but a dead giant will never fight again.

David was not sure what a wounded giant might do, but he could trust a corpse.

With him it was a fight to the finish and the finish was a decapitated Philistine.

"Then David ran, and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head." That Philistine would defy Israel no more.

This is a point where we often stop short and fail to carry out and secure our victory.

Many a general has lost a battle because, having stunned his enemy, he did not follow him up and cut off his head.

We often wound a temptation and get it down, but we leave it in such a condition that it can get up again, and presently we have to fight that same giant.

We chase temptations off the field, but they come back to fight some other day. Our victory over a giant is not finally won and our future secure until we stand upon it and take its sword and cut off its head.

We are too timid and not thorough enough in attacking our faults and sins.

Sometimes we only make a feint of fighting them and may be in secret league with them. We may be only too willing to know that they are only scotched and not dead.

The true soldier of righteousness shoots to kill.

With him it is war to the death against evil, and he leaves off only when its head is off.

Give no quarter to your sins. Stand over them and cut off their heads.

A wounded temptation may come back upon us, but a decapitated temptation will trouble us no more. The only devil we can trust is a dead devil.

"And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled."

Sometimes when we kill a champion devil we kill a whole regiment, or cause them to take flight. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some historic instances of trial by single combat.
2. How did David gain his skill for this battle?
3. How can we win our battles before we come to them?
4. What is a blustering spirit a sign of?
5. What is the bearing of this incident on pacifism?

LESSON V—JULY 31

David and Jonathan

Lesson: I Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7

Golden Text: There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. PROVERBS 18:24.

Devotional Reading: John 15:9-17.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Choosing the Right Kind of Friends.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Obligations of Friendship.

Lesson Text: I Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.
3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.
4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his apparel, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should slay David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David.
2 And Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to slay thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself in the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:
3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and if I see aught, I will tell thee.
4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:
5 For he put his life in his hand, and smote the Philistine, and Jehovah wrought a great victory for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice; wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause.
6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As Jehovah liveth, he shall not be put to death.
7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as before-time.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Jonathan and David.*
2. *Saul's Plot to Kill David.*

3. Jonathan Spake Good of David.
4. Saul's Good Resolution.
5. Saul's Insanity.
6. David's Wise Behaviour.

On the day of his combat with Goliath, David killed an enemy and won a friend.

He was the hero of the hour on that occasion and the splendor of that act attracted and captivated the brave Jonathan, the son of Saul, and this was the beginning of a friendship that is one of the most celebrated and beautiful in all literature.

1. Jonathan and David

David was called before Saul to give account of himself after his combat with the giant. "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

These two young men stand before us as the type of a perfect and beautiful friendship.

Their friendship was the more wonderful as they were rivals for the throne and David stood in Jonathan's way. But Jonathan's pious insight enabled him to see that the kingdom was David's and the crown, instead of thrusting them apart as it so often does, became a golden band to bind them together.

They were rarely fitted for each other so that they grew together as one soul.

Both were gifted and brave, generous and noble, unselfish and sympathetic. They had common ideas and ideals as the basis of their common life and love, yet as soldier and poet they were sufficiently diverse to complement each other.

"Jonathan loved David," says Charles Kingsley, "because his soul was like the soul of David. Because he was modest, he loved David's modesty; because he was brave, he loved David's courage; because he

was virtuous, he loved David's virtue; he saw that David was all that he was himself, and therefore, he loved him as his own soul."

Such friendship realizes the ideal:

> Two souls with but a single thought;
> Two hearts that beat as one.

Life more than anything else is friendship.

We know not how much depends upon the sound of certain voices, the touch of certain hands, the coming of certain feet. When they have vanished we find that the world is one great emptiness.

Whatever else we lose, as long as we have friends we are rich and strong. We should knit ourselves together with as many friends as we can and be true to them and love them as our own souls.

In choosing our friends and especially in forming life friendships we should seek those with whom we have deep common ties, especially moral and spiritual affinities. "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

2. Saul's Plot to Kill David

Saul took David into his service, and the shepherd boy was translated from the sheep field to the king's court.

Yet immediately Saul's anger was kindled against the handsome and popular youth.

The very next chapter of this history opens with the terrible statement that "Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants that they should slay David."

This murderous plot and order grew out of Saul's insane jealousy of David which runs through the preceding chapter. It started in the antiphonal song of the dancing women as the king and his army returned from the victory over the Philistines, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

It was an age when a man was measured by the number of men he had killed.

We have passed this rude age and coarse standard of human greatness and rather measure a man by the number of men he has saved,

Saul was quick to note the unfavorable comparison.

Ten thousands for David and only thousands for himself! What more could the popular youth have but the kingdom itself?

That moment the serpent of hatred was hatched out in Saul's heart, a serpent that grew in strength and venom, striking at all around him and at last crushing the king himself in its coils.

Jealousy or morbid fear and hatred of rivalry and superiority on the part of others, is one of the worst of human passions.

Few things can make a man so unhappy and wretched. It blinds him to all the good he has himself and to all right relations and justice towards others and fastens its diseased consciousness upon one hateful thing.

It may drive him to frenzy bordering on insanity.

It lets loose other passions and may fly to violence and commit murder.

One way to kill this base passion is to avoid comparisons.

It is a mark of a vulgar mind and selfish heart for one always to be comparing himself with others and trying to push into the first place.

We should strive to cultivate the virtue and habit of seeing and admiring excellence in others and even of rejoicing to find others better than ourselves.

Another way of rooting up this evil is to be content with such things as we have. Let David have his ten thousands—do we not have our thousands?

If we made better use of our possessions and opportunities, we would be less troubled with jealousy of others and with envy of what they have.

3. Jonathan Spake Good of David

At this point Jonathan stands forth in a beautiful light. It was to his wordly interest that David should not be permitted to capture the

throne by his popularity, for this would cut Jonathan himself out of the crown.

When we consider all the temptations and intrigues and plots that surround the succession to a throne, Jonathan's unselfishness and faithfulness to his friend are wonderful.

Jonathan "delighted much in David," and now his friendship was put to a sore test. He did not hesitate, but at once confided to David the situation and planned with him to turn his father from his murderous design.

He found his father alone in the field, a good approach to one whom we would influence and turn from some evil purpose and passion or win to some good cause.

If we take him in the midst of busy affairs and exciting circumstances we may only arouse his opposition and make bad matters worse.

A quiet, private interview will often accomplish results that could not otherwise be attained.

Then "Jonathan spake good of David," recounting his valorous deed in slaying the Philistine whereby "Jehovah wrought a great victory for all Israel," so that the king himself "sawest it, and didst rejoice."

There is wonderful psychological insight displayed in this appeal to Saul.

It touches him on the side of gratitude and honor and national deliverance, and set his murderous plot in the light of base ingratitude and envy, suggesting it to Saul rather than expressly forcing it upon him and allowing it to do its work without exciting his resentment.

"Jonathan spake good of David": these are golden words that should set a noble example to every one of us.

He might have spoken words that would have professed friendship for David and yet would have been poisoned with his own selfish purpose

and would have acted like fire in the blood of Saul to make an end of David.

But he spake only sincere and unselfish good and thereby was true to his friend.

The temptation to speak or suggest or insinuate other than good of people is prevalent and strong in the human heart.

By as much as we blacken others we seem to whiten ourselves. But to speak good of others even when we might say or suggest things bad enough, is a noble disposition and habit.

4. Saul's Good Resolution

"And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As Jehovah liveth, he shall not be put to death."

Jonathan's pleading and appeal had its effect and the king's heart was turned. And sincerely turned, we may well believe.

His nature was impulsive and capable of sudden and violent changes of temperamental weather, quickly passing from stormcloud and lightning to blue sky and sunshine.

Passionate natures are usually subject to such changes.

The human heart has an enormous capacity for inconsistency and may exhibit the most contradictory changes and states.

In dealing with such persons we must try to get on the better side of them and lead them to exercise their nobler instincts.

"And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as beforetime."

He was able to act as a peacemaker between the estranged Saul and David and restore them to friendship.

It is a fine and noble thing when we can bring separated friends together and reunite them in the joys of friendship.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God."

The mission of Jesus himself in the world is as the great Peacemaker to restore us to the fellowship of God.

5. *Saul's Insanity*

Smoldering fire is likely soon to burst forth, and an occasion presently occurred to excite again Saul's hatred of David.

War between the Philistines and Israel again set David in the light of a hero, and Saul's insanity rushed back upon him in redoubled fury.

We next read the strange statement that "an evil spirit from Jehovah was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with a spear in his hand." (verse 9).

This "evil spirit from Jehovah" was simply Saul's green-eyed envy, his passionate hatred of David.

The ascription of this evil spirit to Jehovah was in accordance with the Hebrew mind which attributed everything to the Lord, whether good or evil.

This ascription, however, still leaves room for a distinction between the modes in which good and evil come from God.

Good comes from God by his positive enactment and is the outflowing of his own will; evil comes from him by his negative permission and is letting the sinner have his own way.

No one can do anything, not even get angry or commit the wickedest act, independently of God's permission and providence.

The "evil spirit" that thus came from the Lord was Saul's own evil spirit, and so is it with the evil spirits that plague us and through us plague others.

When Saul was thus in a passion David played upon his harp, and this has a quieting effect on the king. "Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast."

While David was thus playing on his harp, Saul kept his hand on his spear and was evidently on the point of striking it into David's heart.

Saul at last hurled the murderous weapon at David, but the alert and agile shepherd boy eluded it and escaped from the king's presence, leaving the spear quivering in the wall.

6. David's Wise Behaviour

It is pleasant to read that through all these trials "David behaved himself wisely in all his ways" (18:14).

The shepherd boy simply did his duty at every point.

When he was sent to keep sheep in his father's field, he kept them well, even to the point of defending them against wild beasts at the risk of his life. When he was sent to carry supplies to his elder brothers in the army, he took them faithfully. When an opportunity presented itself to fight for his country, he trusted God and fought in his name. When he was called to serve the king, he did the best for him, whether it was to play the harp or command a thousand men.

In all these things David kept his place and did his work and therefore Jehovah was with him.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS.

1. Give instances of other historic friendships?
2. What is the true basis of friendship?
3. Ought we ever to do wrong for a friend?
4. What are "the faithful wounds of a friend?" (Prov. 27:6)
5. Is all sin a degree of insanity?

LESSON VI—AUGUST 7

David Spares Saul

Lesson: I Samuel 26:7-14, 17-21

Golden Text: Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. ROMANS 12:21.

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:31-39.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to treat those who wrong us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Overcoming Evil with Good.

Lesson Text: I Samuel 26:7-14, 17-21

7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the place of the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people lay round about him.

8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered up thine enemy into thy hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not smite him the second time.

9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not; for who can put forth his hand against Jehovah's anointed, and be guiltless.

10 And David said, As Jehovah liveth, Jehovah will smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle, and perish.

11 Jehovah forbid that I should put forth my hand against Jehovah's anointed: but now take, I pray thee, the spear that is at his head, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's head; and they gat them away: and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from Jehovah was fallen upon them.

13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of the mountain afar off; a great space being between them;

14 And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?

17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.

18 And he said, Wherefore doth my lord pursue after his servant for what have I done or what evil is in my hand?

19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it be Jehovah that hath stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if it be the children of men, cursed be they before Jehovah; for they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Jehovah, saying, Go, serve other gods.

20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of Jehovah: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A Sleeping King.*
2. *David's Noble Self-restraint.*
3. *David Taunts Saul's General.*
4. *David's Plea to Saul.*
5. *Saul's Penitence.*

After David parted from Jonathan he spent several years hiding in the hill country of Judea.

At Nob he told a falsehood to the high priest in order to obtain bread, and as a consequence the entire family of the priest, save one son, was slaughtered at the command of Saul.

At Gath David feigned madness to escape from the Philistine king, and at the cave of Adullam four hundred malcontents flocked to him as their leader.

At Engedi Saul was in the power of David in a manner similar to that in the present lesson.

The death of Samuel occurs at this point in the narrative, and a great funeral was held at Ranah.

The affair of the churlish Nabal and his quick-witted and beautiful wife is next told.

All these incidents are phrased in the picturesque and graphic speech of primitive life and language.

Primitive ideas of religion also pervade the whole narrative.

1. A Sleeping King

The presence of David in the wilderness of Ziph, near Herbon, was reported to Saul by some Ziphites, and the king came down with 3,000 men in search of the outlaw.

David's spies soon reported the presence of the king, and David himself viewed the king's camp.

He called for volunteers to go to the camp and two men responded. Taking with him his nephew, Abishai, David stole up so close to the camp that he could see the sleeping king, who lay in deep slumber with

his spear stuck in the ground at his head. The king's whole camp was asleep. No sentinel was on guard.

Such lack of vigilance and military precaution indicated a serious relaxation of discipline and exposed the king and his army to danger and possible disaster.

Preparedness has become a great word in our modern military life.

All life is a camp surrounded with enemies and we should ever set a watch and be on our guard to meet and resist all the wiles and snares of temptation.

Many a man has lost the battle of life because he was morally asleep, and many Christians are asleep in the camp of their Lord.

Abishai wanted to smite the sleeping king and declared he could make sure quick work, he would not need to strike twice.

Here is the point where David's nobility asserted itself.

He had his enemy in his hand and might have ended his life at a single stroke.

Very plausible arguments and the most powerful self-interest and passion would urge him on to do the deed. Was not Saul unjustly and cruelly seeking his life and would not even the right of self-defence justify him in taking extreme measures?

How many men in the strength and ambition and passion of youth could withstand such a pressure of temptation?

2. David's Noble Self-restraint

David did. He made a noble speech to Abishai in which he said: "Destroy him not; for who can put forth his hand against Jehovah's anointed, and be guiltless?"

The hunted outlawed youth would not lift his hand against a man he had no right to touch, however sore his grievance against him and however strong the temptation to profit by his death.

In this noble self-restraint he showed himself a kinglier man than if he had taken a city.

He held all his powers and passions under the control of conscience and thus ruled himself. There was the true king, though he did not yet wear a crown.

The same temptation often presses against us.

To strike at those who are wronging us, to say some sharp or ugly word about those whom we do not like or who do not like us, to take advantage of the man who is in our power, to hit the man that is down—who has had an opportunity and not felt the temptation to do this?

The business and political and social worlds are full of such circumstances and opportunities.

A business man may catch a competitor in some squeeze of the market in which he can crush him; a social leader may have an opportunity to say a single word against a rival that would ruin her; a political aspirant may hear of a story about a competing candidate which by being circulated would turn hundreds or thousands of votes against him—such temptations as these are thick in our modern world and many yield to them.

But to resist all such opportunities and solicitations to do evil, to deal justly and generously with an enemy, to speak kindly of him, to take no advantage of his weakness, to walk all around a sleeping enemy and never touch him—this is noble self-control and manhood.

Jesus when he was reviled, reviled not again, and though he had ten legions of angels at his command yet he resisted not his enemies with a sword but let them take him to the cross.

3. David Taunts Saul's General

David went over to the top of a mountain and called to Abner, Saul's sleeping general, taunting him with his neglect in guarding the king's person. "Art thou not a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel?

wherefore then hast thou not kept watch over thy lord the king? This thing is not good that thou hast done. As Jehovah liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept watch over your lord, Jehovah's anointed."

These were the cutting ironical words which David flung at the general, rubbing his eyes as he roused himself out of slumber to see David flourishing the king's spear and holding up the king's cruse of water which had been stolen from the king's bedside.

A valiant man was he! A great general in Israel was this Abner!

This is what Abner paid for his carelessness in sleeping when he should have been watching alertly for his king's safety.

The king might have lost his life as the consequence of his general's lack of vigilance.

Our modern world is a web of social relations in which mutual watchfulness and responsibility are interwoven with every thread of it.

The mother must watch for the child, the teacher for the scholar, the employer for the employe, the governor for the citizen, and everyone for his brother.

Some must sleep while others watch, but no one should be asleep when he should be awake.

Many a train runs into a wreck or many a ship is lost at sea because some one set to watch at the switch or at the wheel falls asleep.

Many young people go astray because those who are set to guide and guard them are asleep or indifferent to their duty.

Many a Sunday school class is doing little good and many a church is inefficiently administered because the teacher or pastor is not on the job.

All who are thus asleep or indifferent at the post of duty are exposing themselves to just judgment and ironical taunts.

Wisdom will laugh at them. "But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh in the day of your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh"(Prov. 1:25-26.)

4. David's Plea to Saul

Saul himself heard and recognized the voice of David and called out to him, "Is this thy voice, my son David?"

There is now a different tone in his voice and he speaks the language of reason and fatherhood.

Already he is beginning to realize his fault and wrong in pursuing David as an enemy and now greets him as a son.

And how does David reply? Does he from his safe position on the mountain top pour upon Saul just wrath and judgment for all the king's wrong and cruelty towards him?

Again David exercises noble self-restraint and appeals to the king in a very different speech. "It is my voice, my lord, O king," recognizing Saul's divine right as king.

He pleads to know why his lord pursues his servant and to know what evil he has done; prays that his blood may not be spilled upon the earth and even Jehovah thus be deprived of his service; and concludes by reminding the king of his own power and safety so that he does not need to "come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains."

Note that David does not flourish Saul's spear in his face or show him his cruse of water snatched from his very presence as proof that David might have cut off his head.

Not a word of triumph was uttered and no word was spoken that would irritate and enrage the king; but all his words were submission and loyalty and peace.

It is a great soul that can speak thus in the presence of one who was justly subject to censure and severe condemnation.

We are quick to strike back and say sharp and irritating and ugly things.

Little men are very impatient of criticism and slow to bear any harsh judgment or ill treatment.

Youth is now charged with being disrespectful and irreverent in its attitude towards the instruction and control of their elders.

David, the shepherd boy, with a crown on his horizon, showed an admirable example of self-control and loyalty and reverence toward an unjust king, and this spirit crowns him with honor greater than any fame he ever won by his sword.

5. *Saul's Penitence*

Saul was a strange mixture of sense and insanity, soberness and folly.

David's appeal brought the king to himself, and the better nature in the man took possession of him.

"Then said Saul, I have sinned: return David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."

How much greater was the victory David had now won over the unjust king than if he had upbraided and cursed him for his injustice or had cut off his head when asleep?

By a few biting words the boy could have infuriated Saul, but by his loyalty and kindness he saved both the king and himself.

How true the proverb: "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but a grievous word stirreth up anger."

Saul began to see things in their true light. David's magnanimity cooled his hatred and cleared his vision and showed him himself.

The sight was not a gratifying one, for he saw a fool.

A sense of his sin seized his conscience, and he made an honest and open confession to David. He did not try to excuse himself, but acknowledged that he had played the fool and erred exceedingly.

Even kings may play the fool and on an enormously bigger scale than

other men as the world knows in our day. But not every fool whether big or little will ever acknowledge or even know the fact.

It is a wise fool that knows he is a fool.

We must give Saul the credit of being sincere in his confession and in his promise that he would do David no harm. It is true that his repentance was as the morning dew and he soon proved false to his promise, but his intention at the moment may have been as honest as Saul could be.

It is hard for a fickle infatuated soul, such as Saul was, to be thoroughly honest and stable in its purposes.

It is one of the fatalities of life that the soul may become so saturated with sin that repentance can find nothing to lay hold of and can have no solid root.

"I have sinned" and "I have played the fool"—these are two aspects of the same act.

Sin is always folly, and every time we sin we play the fool.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What other army in Scripture history was once caught asleep?
2. Give other examples in Scripture of noble self-restraint.
3. Is it ever right to taunt people?
4. What does loyalty to our government require of us when we do not agree with it?
5. Give some noted Scripture illustrations of the folly of sin.

LESSON VII—AUGUST 14

David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem

Lesson: II Samuel 2:3-4; 5:1-3; 6:12-15

Golden Text: We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, thy holy temple. PSALM 65:4.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 84:1-4, 10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to worship God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Exalting God in Individual and National Life.

Lesson Text: II Samuel 2:3-4; 5:1-3; 6:12-15

3 And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, The men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul.

Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2 In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was thou that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and Jehovah said to thee, Thou shalt be shepherd of my people Israel, and thou shalt be prince over Israel.

3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Jehovah: and they anointed David king over Israel.

12 And it was told king David, saying, Jehovah hath blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. And David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with joy.

13 And it was so, that, when they that bare the ark of Jehovah had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.

14 And David danced before Jehovah with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Jehovah with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***David and the Men of Judah.***
2. ***The Men of Jabesh-gilead.***
3. ***The Covenant at Hebron.***
4. ***The Ark Brought to Jerusalem.***

Saul and Jonathan had perished together in the fatal battle with the Philistines at Gilboa.

This tragedy called forth from the poet-friend of Jonathan his passionate and rarely beautiful threnody (II Samuel 1:19-27), which may be justly classed with Milton's Lycidas, Shelley's Adonais and Tennyson's In Memoriam, three immortal English poems.

No hand can rear so majestic and beautiful and lasting a mausoleum as that of the poet.

David lamented and commemorated his friend in immortal lines, many of which passed into the literature of the world and are household words.

1. David and the Men of Judah

"And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of Jehovah, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And Jehovah said, Go up."

Judah was David's own tribe and it was important that he should have its support.

David then came, with his men and settled at Hebron. "And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah."

This was a special local anointing of David by the men of his own tribe and it grounded his throne in ancestral roots.

It saved David's crown from any appearance of being a foreign imposition and gave it democratic support.

There was always a large amount of democracy in the Hebrew theocracy.

The Bible is friendly to popular government, and, in ordaining the powers that are of God, gives the people something to say.

Democracy and theocracy are not antagonistic, but should go together.

Democracy is now becoming almost worldwide and has its most splendid exemplification in our country, but it has its dangers and we need to keep it rooted in the deeper basis and on the bed rock of stable and just government, which is the righteousness of God.

The crown came to David along the line of simple obedience.

He asked the Lord where to go, and when he went up thither, not knowing what awaited him, he found that Hebron was his throne. If he had demanded the crown before he started, he never would have obtained it.

He took many a weary step along the toilsome path of duty before its brightness gleamed upon him. The steps of faithfulness that led him to that hour of honor started far back in his shepherd boy days.

Kingly power is the slow accumulation of years of training.

We must serve faithfully and long if we would rule. The best rewards come through service and we never know at what unexpected moment the path of duty will blossom into beauty.

The highest crown we can win is Christlike character; this crown radiates only blessings upon us and upon others, and it shall never fade away but shall shine as the stars forever.

2. The Men of Jabesh-gilead

It was now told to David that the men of Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul.

This gave David an opportunity to send a message to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and through them to the disaffected people of the North, in which he showed his wisdom and statesmanship.

Already Israel was alienated from Judah, and the new king was confronted with the difficult and delicate problem of uniting a divided nation.

First, David commended the men of Jabesh-gilead for the respect they had paid to their fallen king.

He thus approved of their loyalty to Saul and complimented their sense of honor and thus won their good will toward himself.

Recognizing the good they have already done is a fine way of luring men into doing more good. Judicious commendation is an atmosphere in which men and especially children are stimulated to do their best.

Next, David assured the men of Jabesh-gilead that their kindness should be paid back to them. The Lord would shew them kindness and David himself would requite them.

He thus disarmed them of any suspicion and fear that they may have had toward the new king of southern birth and affiliations and put himself in pleasant relations with them.

Kindness always begets kindness and with what measure we mete it it shall be measured unto us.

David was now in a position to make an indirect but powerful appeal to the men of Jabesh-gilead and to all the people of the North to acknowledge his crown. He urged them to be strong and valiant and then reminded them that Saul their lord was dead and that Judah had anointed him king over it, delicatly leaving them to draw their own conclusions and to take their own action with reference to himself.

By not pushing his authority into unpleasant and irritating prominence and forcing his crown upon them, he made it easy for them to accept him.

David understood the fine art of conciliation, and this spirit is ever a potent influence in healing divisions and wounds in church or state, family or social life.

3. The Covenant at Hebron

David's conciliatory policy and spirit had its effect and in due time "came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh."

They went on to recite the events of their recent history and emphasized the fact that Jehovah had declared to David, "Thou shalt be prince over all Israel." "So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron."

This marked an epoch in the history of the Hebrew people.

Hitherto the twelve tribes had been only loosely hanging together, very much after the manner of the thirteen colonies in our early history, Now they were at last unified and compacted into one government under one crown. This was a long step forward and led on to the great days of the kingdom when Solomon sat in splendor on his throne and ruled over a united people.

The disasters that attend a divided nation or a divided country are written broadly and tragically over all the pages of history.

Our own nation narrowly escaped division in its Civil War and the broad basis of our national strength and prosperity is the fact that we are one nation from ocean to ocean and from lake to gulf.

Had our country been split into fragments we would be today in the condition of Europe; for the main root of its trouble is that for a thousand years it has been divided into many nations with friction and explosive elements operating along all their boundaries and at times fulminating in war.

The Great War itself was the product of this disunity.

We need to guard our national unity and prevent any divisive seeds getting into our own government and life.

There are still many dangerous elements in our wide and complex national life, such as racial differences and prejudices and class distinctions and interests and destructive doctrines of radicalism that would blow our country to pieces.

Only loyalty to our united country and its laws can preserve our glorious inheritance of unity and prosperity.

While the men of Israel gave their undivided allegiance to David, David in turn "made a covenant with them in Hebron before Jehovah." It was not a case where the authority and honor and emoluments were all on the side of the ruler, and all the submission and obedience and taxes were on the subjects, but there were obligations on both sides.

The king also bound himself to faithful service in his office, and he did this "before Jehovah" as a religious obligation.

All our public officials from the President down to the humblest constable or policeman are under this obligation to render faithful service in his office.

The people, also, are bound to discharge their duties as good citizens.

We can conserve and advance our national unity and prosperity only as we recognize public office as a public trust and citizenship as a public duty and discharge all these public and private civic duties as ordained of God and fulfill them in loyalty to him.

4. The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

David was now secure in his united kingdom, and there was a lull in the affairs of state.

In this peaceful time he turned his attention to the spiritual interests of his kingdom and carried out an important project.

Seventy years before the ark had been profanely and superstitiously carried from Shiloh out upon the field of battle against the Philistines and had fallen into their pagan hands, which was a terrible shock and scandal to Hebrew faith.

David had now made Jerusalem his capital and he saw its fatal incompleteness and lack in not having the ark of Jehovah in its sacred precincts and he set about to correct this defect.

He thought of the ark only eleven miles away where it rested in in the house of Abinadab and his imagination flamed as he pictured it being brought up and installed with stately ceremony in its proper place.

Thirty thousand picked men were gathered from all Israel and a great host went down to Kirjath-jearim, a border town, to bring up the precious shrine. The ark was carried out of the house of Abinadab by his sons and set upon a new cart and the procession started.

On the way an unfortunate incident occurred.

At one point the oxen stumbled and Uzzah took hold of the ark to steady it and was smitten with death. It appears that they thought that they must hold up the ark and support it, whereas the ark was not dependent on them but they were dependent on the ark.

We may be guilty of self-sufficiency and pride and irreverence in our attempts at helping God.

There are many points at which God does not need our help. He can hold up the stars without our putting props under them, and we do not need to steady his great white throne.

The Bible and church and kingdom of God are never in danger in the sense in which some good men think, and all their anxiety and fears are a kind of practical distrust of God.

The ark was now carried aside into the house of Obed-edom and there is where it was at this time.

It was presently told King David that "Jehovah hath blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God."

The unconscious influence of the humble rustic Israelite reached up into the city and palace of the king, and his faithfulness brought a blessing to the king and helped to shape the destiny of the nation.

Again a procession started with the ark and now they realized that "they bare the ark of Jehovah" and kept their profane hands off of it. David swept off on a tide of enthusiasm, "danced before Jehovah with all his might," and "David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Jehovah with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet."

It was a great day in Jerusalem when the ark was carried into the city and the gladness poured in streams of song and shouting through all the streets.

David composed a magnificent psalm for the occasion (I Chron. 16,) a choir was organized and public worship was established.

When God is enthroned in the city and nation, the city and nation are safe.

Suggested Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the events leading up to the battle of Gilboa.
2. Was David a good politican in his dealings with the men of Judah and of Jabesh-gilead?
3. How do we inaugurate our President and is God recognized in the ceremony?
4. What corresponds with the ark in our Christian faith and worship?

LESSON VIII—AUGUST 21

God's Promise to David

Lesson: Chronicles 17:1-12

Golden Text: Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. HEBREWS 1:8.

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 1:8-12.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How God Gives Us the Better Things.

Topic for Young People and Adults: God's Great Promises.

Lesson Text: I Chronicles 17:1-12

And it came to pass, when David dwelt in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah *dwelleth* under curtains.

2 And Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thy heart; for God is with thee.

3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith Jehovah, Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in:

5 For I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel, unto this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from *one* tabernacle *to another*.

6 In all places wherein I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to be shepherd of my people, saying, Why have ye not built me a house of cedar?

7 Now therefore, thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be prince over my people Israel:

8 And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast gone, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee; and I will make thee a name, like unto the name of the great ones that are in the earth.

9 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the first,

10 And *as* from the day that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel; and I will subdue all thine enemies. Moreover I tell thee that Jehovah will build thee a house.

11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days are fulfilled that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will set up thy seed after thee, who shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

12 He shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Good Purpose Disappointed.

2. A Great Name for David.

3. A House for David.
4. A Temple for Jehovah.
5. An Everlasting Kingdom.

David was now established on his throne over a united nation. His capital city was founded and fortified. The ark had been put in its proper place and public worship inaugurated. A palace for David had been built of costly imported wood by foreign artisans.

David had reached a point where he might be expected to rest on his achievements and honors.

But he ever "went on" and another noble ambition seized his heart.

As he sat in his luxurious palace he thought of the ark of God dwelling in curtains, and he conceived the plan of building a great temple whose splendid architecture would enrich the city and be worthy of the worship of Jehovah.

Our lesson tells us what became of this purpose.

1. A Good Purpose Disappointed

The purpose itself was good.

David had a fine sense of the fitness of things.

A cedar palace for himself and tent of sheepskins for the ark of God did not seem to him to balance and blend into harmony. His sense of rhythm was offended by the discrepancy as by a painful discord: he would have the house of man and the house of God match and make one music.

There should always be proportion and harmony between the home and the church.

It is not seemly that men should live in costly homes and worship in cheap churches.

All life should be proportioned and balanced so as to blend into unbroken concord.

David's purpose, when proposed to Nathan, struck him as being good and the prophet told the king to go ahead with his project.

But even prophets could make mistakes and the matter needed further light.

Light came that night to Nathan in the way of a revelation from Jehovah that countermanded the prophet's sanction and called a halt upon the king. "Thus saith Jehovah, Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in."

A flat divine refusal was thus laid on David's good plan.

Noble human purposes may thus encounter divine prohibition. Our purest aspirations may be forbidden of heaven.

Tragic disappointments attend our dearest hopes. The most splendid visions may fade out into a leaden sky.

Yet there is always a reason for such divine disappointments, and a general reason for David's disillusionment was that the proper time for building the temple had not yet come.

David had yet much work to do in enlarging and strengthening his kingdom and it would not have been wise for him to enter upon so large and costly an enterprise.

A special reason assigned for his not building the temple (I Chron. 22:8) also was that he had made great wars, and it was not seemly that bloody hands should build the walls of worship.

There are things that even some good men are not fitted to do and there are proprieties to be observed.

The house and worship of God should be kept free from associations and suggestions that would be incongruous and would have even the appearance of desecration.

2. A Great Name for David

The prohibition laid upon David, however, did not end in a dead blank, but it went forward and brought him out into a large place.

The building of the temple may have seemed to David necessary to the completion of his capital and the crowning of his life-work; and the unexpected stop put on his plans seemed to thwart his purest purpose and leave his life unfinished.

God himself seemed to have turned against him at the very point where he was surest of his help.

This view of the case was offset by a larger view of life that was now brought before him.

He was reminded that it was Jehovah who had taken him from the sheepcote and made him ruler over Israel; who had been with him whithersoever he went and had cut off his enemies and had made his name great; and who would continue to appoint a place for his people Israel.

Thus David was lifted out of the narrow pit of disappointment into which he had fallen and set upon an elevation where he could see life in the large and trace the divineness that had linked all his days together like loops of gold.

Disappointment and discouragement spring from short views of life and the cure for them is a long view.

We cannot see any color in an inch of atmosphere, but when we look through miles of it we see it tinted with heavenly blue.

We cannot see much divine providence in a day, and when we stand in the shadows of disappointment we may not see any of it, but when we look back through all our days we may see the divinity that has been shaping our ends and gathering up all our little plans and broken hopes into some larger and better purpose.

3. A House for David

Not only was David's general faith thus strengthened, but he was given a definite and inspiring promise. "Moreover I tell thee that Jehovah will build thee a house."

While David was planning a house for the Lord, the Lord was planning a house for David.

While we are working for God, God is working for us; and the very blessing we are devising and working for in his service for others he is bestowing on us.

While we are striving to build up his righteousness in the world and thus are seeking to glorify him, he is building up his righteousness in our hearts and is thus glorifying us.

In serving him we enrich ourselves.

The time and toil, service and sacrifice we contribute to his temple will come back to build and beautify our own house.

God will not let us build a house for him and then leave us homeless.

However large may be our thoughts towards him, infinitely larger and more loving are his thoughts towards us.

This promise was abundant compensation for David in his disappointment, and the same principle should sustain and comfort us.

Yet David must wait for the promise. "When thy days are fulfilled that thou must go to be with thy fathers," David's son "shall build me a house."

We must postpone the fulfillment of some of our plans beyond the grave.

We cannot do all the work that is to be done and put the last finishing touches on this world in our short lives but must leave something for those that come after us.

When our days are fulfilled not even our own little plans will be fulfilled and we shall hand them over unfinished to the next generation.

But we can start plans and purposes that will roll through the future and shape distant ends, we can lay foundations on which other workers will build, we can plant seeds that will blossom and ripen long after we are gone.

The house that Jehovah promised to David ("Jehovah shall build thee a house,") turned out to be Jehovah's own house ("He shall build me a house,") and thus David's house and Jehovah's house were identified. And so should it always be with us.

Our work and God's work are not two but one, and our house, whether it be our home or office or business block, should also be the Lord's house in which his work is done and his name is glorified.

4. A Temple for Jehovah

The promise with reference to a temple was made more definite still. Jehovah would raise up after David a seed and "he shall build me a house."

David's plan, that seemed so rudely stopped, after all was not thwarted but went on to completion.

The divine purpose running through the ages includes in its grand sweep all our little plans in so far as they are wise and good and reach righteous ends.

"Thou must go," but "he shall build." "God buries the workmen but carries on the work."

He is not dependent on us, however pure our purposes and strong our hands, for he can raise up others that will carry on the work: he can let us go and still push his work on.

David was not permitted to build the temple, but he trained up a son that did build it. In training that boy he was building a grander temple than ever his brain could have dreamed or his hands have reared.

The father often repeats himself in his son and the son perpetuates the father.

Many a father has cherished some noble plan which he vainly strove to realize, but which came to completion and full-blown glory in his son.

Many a mother has had fond hopes which long after she slept took shape and substance in her boy that lay as a baby on her breast while she dreamed her dreams.

The father of Matthew Henry little knew, when he was offering homely comments on the Bible as he read it at family worship, that he was supplying the materials which afterwards the son built into a commentary on the Bible that was widely read for generations.

No one knows in faithfully training a son or daughter, child or scholar, what temple he or she may build.

The thought and care, sacrifice and tears, visions and values that we expend upon a child after we sleep may rise into fretted roofs and gilded spires that will bless and beautify the world in ages to come.

5. An Everlasting Kingdom

The earthly temple on which David had set his heart was the smallest part of the promise that was made to him. "And I will establish his throne forever."

Here the promise overleaps the boundaries of the material and temporal into the spiritual and eternal.

A physical and political kingdom "established forever" never yet has been set up on this earth.

The centuries are an expanse of change in which all thrones and human seats of power melt down like icebergs in a summer sea.

Yet this promise still stands, and more and more is it coming to fulfillment.

It is true that David no longer sits on his throne in Jerusalem, but David's spiritual Son sits on the throne of the moral and spiritual world.

Jesus is literally the descendant of David according to the flesh, and out of that little kingdom of Israel, as a blossom out of its coarse calyx or a giant Redwood pushing its top up four hundred feet into the sun out of a tiny seed, came the church of Christ, which is destined to grow into the spiritual kingdom of the world and the eternal kingdom of heaven.

Already Jesus shines the Master of the world, and more and more will his kingdom widen with the process of the suns until his will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Thus the blessing enlarged upon David and outran his widest thought and most splendid hope. He sought to build a temple occuping a little space with its stone walls and cedar-wood furniture and enbroidered tapestries, but he obtained a kingdom that is even now rearing its walls around our horizon and laying its golden pavements right under our feet.

The material blessing he fain would have grasped melted into the spiritual, and the temporal merged into the eternal.

God always has some better thing for us than we can ask or think, and his best blessing is the temple built upon our Lord Jesus as the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are our good purposes often disappointed?
2. Was Jesus himself in any sense disappointed?
3. What becomes of many great family ambitions?
4. What kind of churches should we build?
5. What is our part in building God's great world temple?

LESSON IX—AUGUST 28

Nathan Leads David to Repentance

Lesson: II Samuel 12:1-13

Golden Text: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. PSALM 51:17.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 103:8-14.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Confessing and Forsaking Sin.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Repentance: What It Is, and What It Does.

Lesson Text: II Samuel 12:1-13

And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.
2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds;
3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.
4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.
5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die:
6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.
7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;
8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added unto thee such and such things.
9 Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight thou hast smitten Uriah and Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.
10 Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.
11 Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house; and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.
12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.
13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against Jehovah. And Nathan said unto David, Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *David's Sin.*
2. *One Sin Leads to Another.*
3. *Sin Cannot Be Concealed.*
4. *Blinding Effect of Sin.*
5. *David's Repentance.*

This sin of David is one of the darkest chapters in the Bible.

The fact that it is recorded in Scripture casts no shadow on the purity of the book, but only exhibits its honesty.

It will spare no sin, not even in the life of the greatest king that ever sat on the throne of the Hebrew monarchy.

The sun brings no discredit upon itself when it falls upon slime and mud and reveals their repulsive nature, and the Bible is unsullied as it lets its light fall upon human sin in all its nakedness and vileness that it may condemn it and show us its fearful nature and consequences.

1. David's Sin

The sin of David was the sordid story of lust and murder recorded in the preceding chapter, and looked at in a general view it shows that no one is proof against temptation and that even the greatest and best men may fall.

David attained to such a summit of success and power that it might have been thought that there was nothing more he could desire and that temptation could find no joint in his armor through which to attack and conquer him.

Yet his very success and comfort and luxury had pampered his appetites and weakened his will until the sight of temptation was enough to ensnare him in its net.

The appeals of temptation are not always specially alluring and strong to those in poverty and want: rather they are all the more seductive and powerful against those who have abundance and may be satiated.

Wealth multiplies the opportunities and the means of temptation, and luxury and ease tend to sap and rot the fibres of character, and those who have attained these things need to take heed lest they fall.

David was a good man, who composed some of the finest and loftiest poetry and song that have blessed the world; at times the Spirit of God was poured out upon him copiously and he was a genuine saint according to the light of his day.

And yet he fell into this deepest and blackest pit of sin contained in the Old Testament.

His sensitive poetic nature and high position and wealth and power made it possible for him to fall to such a depth.

The greater the saintship of a man the greater may be his sin; the whiter his character the blacker is any blot he puts upon it. Good men may do the worst things, for if the light that is in them be darkness how great that darkness.

There is a sharp personal lesson of warning at this point and every one should take heed lest he fall.

2. One Sin Leads to Another

A second fact impressed upon us in this sad affair is that one sin inevitably leads on to another. David's sin began in a secret look and that look finally led on to action.

The eye-gate has ever been the highway of temptation since Eve looked upon the forbidden fruit and "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise."

Temptation thus intensifies itself and absorbs the whole soul.

Looking leads on to lusting and then to sensual living. We ought not look on anything that we do not want to take into our life, for the one act runs into the other.

David, having involved himself in the net of sin, began to struggle to free himself from its entanglement and this led him to devise other and more wicked means to hide his guilt and escape exposure.

Having invaded and violated Uriah's home, he next plotted to take Uriah's life, and with the coolest cunning sent the loyal unsuspecting soldier to his death. To adultery he added murder; he tried to wipe out and cover up his first sin with the blood of the very man whose home he had violated.

Sin has never changed its logic by which it works in this same fatal chain.

That one sin leads on to another is the history of every crime. Always back of the open sin are other unseen sins which are the hidden seeds out of which the scarlet blossom grew.

First comes an evil thought, then the desire, then the deed, and then another deed to conceal or carry out the first deed, and so on to the final deed that results in exposure and the public undoing of the transgressor. The drunkard never becomes a drunkard by one act: a first glass leads on to a second, and thus is started the slippery path that leads down into a drunkard's grave.

The way to stop sin is to stop the first look and germ of lust; the time to crush this crocodile is when it is in the egg.

If we take care of our thoughts and desires, our deeds will take care of themselves.

3. Sin Cannot Be Concealed

The impossibility of concealing sin is strikingly illustrated in the case of David. He had all the resources of his kingdom at his command, wealth and power, the secrecy of his palace, soldiers at his bidding, and apparently there was none to dispute his will or uncover his deeds.

This deed was done in the securest privacy, and every means was taken to cover it up.

The plot to remove Uriah was so cunningly contrived and executed that it would seem that no expertest detective could have penetrated through its secrecy and exposed the guilty king.

David thought of everything in his wicked scheme except the Lord! He had left him out of his cunning calculations, and this omission proved his undoing.

"And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David." Here was the fatal defect in the king's plot: he had looked all around to see what others were doing or might do, but he did not look up to see what the Lord was doing.

"Be sure your sin will find you out" is a law woven into the whole web of the world.

For sin must weave around itself a tissue of lies and sooner or later this will come into contact with and be torn to pieces by the hard facts in the case, and then its falsity and rottenness will be exposed.

Often startling and unexpected are the ways by which secret sin is discovered and dragged to light.

Any slightest event may turn detective and bring the guilty thing into judgment. When we think we are most secure, suddenly the finger of some prophet or messenger of God will be pointed at us with the fearful announcement, "Thou art the man."

Even if it is not exposed to the view and judgment of man, it is etched upon the memory and heart of the guilty transgressor and it will gnaw like a deadly cancer into the substance of his soul.

The sinner must eat of the fruit of his own doings and thus carries his judgment seat and his punishment in his own burning bosom.

His guilty deed is also incorporated in the very framework of nature and is written in the rocks and stamped upon the stars.

The whole universe is made aware of his guilt and has filed it away in its imperishable archives.

And Though men and nature may not blab it out in public exposure, God's eye sees it and his judgment never slumbers or sleeps.

4. Blinding Effect of Sin

The blinding effect of sin upon the judgment, especially upon self-judgment, is seen in the case of David.

Nathan painted a picture of a sin which exactly corresponded with David's, only it was not so dark and heinous in its wickedness and guilt.

David looked on it with horror. Swift indignation swept his soul and stirred him to righteous judgment: "As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die."

David did not know himself when he stood face to face with his own portrait.

He was quick to see in another man a sin which he could not see in himself, though it was ten fold blacker in himself than in the man he so severely judged.

It is curious psychological blindness that hides from our own eyes sins in ourselves which we can see in glaring guilt in others.

This affords a good test for our own character and conduct: let us imagine them in others and see how they then affect us. If when we have dissociated them from our personal interest and partisanship they will not stand our own judgment we should be quick to see their fault in ourselves and put them away.

Nothing can be good in us that is bad in others, and we should be just as severe in our judgment of ourselves as of others.

And yet how lenient and blind we are in self-exculpation. How many people would not recognize themselves if they suddenly met their own duplicates or stood face to face with their own souls!

Passing indignant judgment upon a supposed case of guilty action, any one of us might be suddenly and tragically halted with the disclosure, "Thou art the man."

No sin has ever been committed that we might not have committed, for the seeds of all sin are lying dormant in us.

But our own sins will tear the mask off our faces and visit upon us their own self-judgment. "Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house."

David's punishment grew right out of the home which he had built by this guilty murderous deed. He sowed the seeds of his own sorrow in after years when he became a broken-hearted old man.

And his judgment was not hidden as he thought his sin was. "For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

With what judgment we judge we shall be judged.

This is a fair social law and it should make us charitable toward others and severe with ourselves.

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out first the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

5. David's Repentance

"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against Jehovah." That was the good point about David: he turned from his sin in sincere repentance and confession.

Conscience was still alive and tender in him and responded to his sense of guilt and moved him to penitence and tears.

The Fifty-first Psalm, which is ascribed to him in connection with this event, shows how deep and bitter was his remorse and how sincere was his turning from his sin unto God.

This is the first step we should take out of our sin.

It is folly to think to conceal what is done "before the sun," and the only cure for it is to out with it in thorough repentance and confession.

"And Nathan said unto David, Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

There is ever a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea to wash out our guilt and cleanse us from all unrighteousness into purity and peace.

"Thou shalt not die:" is then the law that the wages of sin is death abrogated and annulled by this act of divine forgiveness? No, sin is still death, but God himself in his Son has opened the way through the cross by which sin bears the retribution of death and yet the sinner is set free in newness of life.

This is the gospel of the Son of God. If we confess our sin God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and blessed is he whose transgression is covered, whose sin is forgiven.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Who was Nathan?
2. Does good also lead on to more good?
3. Are not some criminals never discovered?
4. How can we see ourselves as others see us?
5. What is repentance?

LESSON X—SEPTEMBER 4

Solomon's Wise Choice

Lesson: I Kings 3:4-15

Golden Text: Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. PROVERBS 3:13.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 8: 12-19.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Choosing Things Worth While.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Best Things in Life.

Lesson Text: I Kings 3:4-15

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

5 In Gibeon Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6 And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great lovingkindness, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great lovingkindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 And now, O Jehovah my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people.

10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern justice;

12 Behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there hath been none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days.

14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream: and he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and offered up burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *A Dazzling Offer in a Dream.*
2. *An Unusual Confession.*
3. *A Remarkable Prayer.*
4. *A Wonderful Answer.*

David has passed to his fathers and his son Solomon is on the throne. Some old scores in the house of David were then settled up in blood. Adonijah, Joab and Shimel were put to death.

Solomon had now cleared the stage and was ready for action.

He was young in years, beautiful in person and splendidly endowed in mind. He had stepped on the throne just as it was rising to the zenith of its power and glory. Already he was the idol of his people.

No more splendid prospect ever dazzled the eyes of youth at the threshold of life.

It was enough to blind and lead astray one of older years and ripet wisdom. But Solomon had been trained up in the admonition of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David.

Soon after his coronation he proceeded in company with a great concourse of dignitaries to the sacred city of Gibeon where a solemn assembly was held and a thousand offerings were sacrificed to Jehovah.

1. A Dazzling Offer in a Dream

That night an event occurred that threw its influence over Solomon's whole future life. As he lay in slumber the Spirit of the Lord visited him in a dream, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

The entire scene of this event is set in the theater of a dream: it was only a dream choice that Solomon made.

Yet this does not throw doubt upon its deep-rooted reality, but may rather confirm it.

Dreams are by no means a capricious and chaotic world, but are bounded by our nature and habits and are woven of the inmost tissues of our being and have profound psychological and moral meaning. They often reveal the deeper currents of our life, the things that are working unconsciously at the springs of our being.

They show us picturesquely what we are and sometimes are a startling self-revelation.

The choice that comes forth in a dream, then, may shoot from the core of our character and may express our moral nature as truly as a deliberated volition.

"Ask what I shall give thee." What a dazzling and dangerous offer was this to put before Solomon!

It virtually placed within his reach whatsoever he would desire.

He might have long life and a prosperous reign, wealth and power and fame; or he might have wisdom from the Lord. It was a critical moment with him; a breath might turn the scale.

Essentially the same choice is placed before us,

God has not decided our destiny for us, but has endowed us with the power of will and choice and has put our character and destiny in our own hands.

He is ever asking us, "What shall I give thee," and we may have good or evil according as we choose.

If we hide our lives with Christ in God so as to turn our lives into the channel of his will, he will trust us to ask and he will promise, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do."

2. An Unusual Confession

Solomon's answer to this request is remarkable for its wisdom and beauty and has been the praise of all the ages. After acknowledging God's kindness to his father and the honor conferred on himself, he exclaims, "And I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in."

The brilliant and powerful prince was modest and humble.

With great honors and responsibilities suddenly thrust upon him, he did not swell up with a sense of authority and pride, but realized his limitations and weakness. He knew that hardest of all things to know: he knew that he did not know.

Such a spirit in us is our greatest teacher and will surely lead us into the right path. Humility is a primary condition of prayer and of all guidance and growth.

"I am but a little child," said the great and wise Solomon, and the same confession is appropriate to man in our day.

There is much in the progress and spirit of our age which suggests a different view of man.

We see such splendid triumphs of his genius in every department of thought and action. See how he has searched the earth, weighed it in his balance and probed it to its core. He has unwrapped the sun coat after coat and forced the light to tell the secret of the stars. He has captured the most subtle and powerful energies of nature and made them his nimble servants.

As we consider his achievements we are moved to exclaim, "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties! in action, how like an angel; in apprehension how like a god!"

And thus the tendency of our age is to glorify and deify man. He proclaims himself a god rather than confesses himself a little child.

And yet the confession of Solomon is the true estimate to put upon man.

He is still and ever will be comparatively a little child. His achievements, while they show his greatness, also show his littleness.

His very science serves to reveal his ignorance.

Every problem he solves only starts a hundred others that he has not solved and perhaps never can solve; and thus man's ignorance, so to speak, grows faster than his knowledge.

Newton himself confessed, "I am but a little child picking up a few pebbles on the great shore of truth."

Man's control over physical forces is after all very slight.

The giant wheels of nature turn round and round, the earth spins on its axis and speeds on its course, the stars move in their majestic orbits, as little affected by the power of man as is a rushing locomotive by a fly. And so is it everywhere. The currents of history sweep on, the laws of trade operate, the great world rolls along, carrying man whithersoever they will.

He is but an atom on this mere speck of earth floating in the infinite expanse of the universe of God.

Instead of proclaiming himself a deity, it becomes man with a sense of his helplessness to confess that he is but a little child.

3. A Remarkable Prayer

"Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart," prayed Solomon."

His wonderful humility gave birth to this wonderful prayer.

When we consider what he might have asked for, this petition stands out in lofty wisdom and splendid beauty.

It is the heart that rules the life.

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Get the heart right and all things else will come right.

An understanding heart is one that perceives the eternal difference between right and wrong and is governed by the principles of righteousness.

Solomon knew the dangers to which he would be exposed of being swayed by selfish policies that would blind him to truth and blur moral distinctions, and therefore he prayed for a heart to discern between good and bad.

Powerful influences play upon us to confuse these distinctions.

We may be unjust and uncharitable, bigoted and bitter, in our judgments, and yet not perceive the fact. Often we are tempted to venture on dangerous ground and strain the principles of righteousness to gain a personal point. There may be times when a lie seems to us better than the truth.

There are hours when we would rather be rich than right.
But the understanding heart has a deeper and truer view.

It perceives that right, however slowly it may bring success, whatever hardships and losses it may encounter, however unpopular and opposed and persecuted it may be, is still right and in the end it will bring blessing; and that wrong, though it may be hidden from the sight of men, though it bring riches and win success and popular applause, is still wrong and in the end will work ruin.

The man of understanding heart perceives wrong when mixed up with his own interests as clearly as when mixed up with the interests of others.

Whatever policy and self-interest may plead, his understanding heart tells him with the spontaneity and certainty of an instinct that right is his only safety and blessing.

"Boy," said a slave dealer in the old days to a slave boy on the auction block, "if I buy you, will you be honest?" "Sir," answered the boy, "I will be honest whether you buy me or not." Beneath the black skin of that slave boy beat an understanding heart.

Amidst all the intricacies and perplexities of conduct, where right and wrong are so closely interwoven, and amidst the play of self-interest and passion, this understanding heart will discern between good and bad and enable us to walk in the right way with steadfastness and joy.

4. A Wonderful Answer

This speech pleased the Lord and drew from him a wonderful answer that matched the prayer and went far beyond it in the abundance of its blessing.

The Lord was pleased, first, with what Solomon did not ask for, long life, riches and vengeance upon his enemies.

These are the things that lie most directly in the line of our natural desires and that we reach after first.

But we cannot tell whether it will be good for us to have these things or not, and it is doubtful whether we ought to pray for them. A safer prayer is that of Agur: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food that is needful for me."

What we leave out of our prayers is thus as important as what we put in and we may please the Lord as much in our not asking as in our asking.

The Lord was pleased, next, with what Solomon did ask for, an understanding heart, and this was given him in large measure beyond any man of his day.

When we ask in the right spirit for the right things prayer works without fail. We cannot ask for material treasures with any assurance that we shall receive them, but when we ask for spiritual blessings the promise is that we shall find them.

There is enough of these to go around, it is good for us to have them, and the Lord delights to give them.

And now the answer of the Lord leaped beyond the prayer of Solomon into unasked blessings. Along with the understanding heart was given him that which he had not asked, both riches and honor.

He got what he asked for and these were thrown in extra.

He was given good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.

He received the wisdom of heaven because he asked for it, and the wealth of earth because he did not ask for it.

He preferred grace to gold and then he got both.

The Lord is no niggardly giver, but when he finds the right supplicant the blessing flows until there is not room to receive it. The best way to get gold is to get grace.

Right and riches are more closely connected than often appears.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Trace the steps by which Solomon came to the throne.
2. What are some of the special temptations of youth in this day?
3. Does the progress in science add much to man's real greatness? What does measure human stature?
4. Give Scriptural instances of remarkable answers to prayer.
5. What is the highest value and supreme choice of life?

LESSON XI—SEPTEMBER 11

Solomon Dedicates the Temple

Lesson: I Kings 8:1-11, 62-63

Golden Text: I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Jehovah. PSALM 122:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 122.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Love for God's House.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Value of God's House to a Community.

Lesson Text: I Kings 8:1-11, 62-63

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the princes of the fathers' *houses* of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the city of David, which is Zion.

2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.

3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.

4 And they brought up the ark of Jehovah, and the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent; even these did the priests and the Levites bring up.

5 And king Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be counted nor numbered for multitude.

6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Jehovah unto its place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim.

7 For the cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above.

8 And the staves were so long that the ends of the staves were seen from the holy place before the oracle; but they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day.

9 There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when Jehovah made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

10 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of Jehovah,

11 So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of Jehovah.

62 And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before Jehovah.

63 And Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace-offerings, which he offered unto Jehovah, two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of Jehovah.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A Religious Nation.*
2. *The Ark Put in Its Place.*
3. *The Two Tables of Stone.*
4. *The Glory of Jehovah.*
5. *The Concluding Sacrifice.*

The Temple was seven and a half years in building. It was dedicated in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles about the beginning of October.

This feast itself was a great national holiday when practically the whole nation came up to Jerusalem, and this historic occasion drew the last man that could come from the most distant border of the kingdom and an enormous multitude crowded the city.

The dedication of the temple was the most spectacular and imposing ceremony ever performed in the history of the Hebrew monarchy.

The temple area was packed with people. White-robed priests thronged the courts and the high priest appeared in the gorgeous insignia of his office. A great chorus accompanied with an elaborate orchestra sent floods of song surging out over the throng and rolling down the sides of Zion. The temple stalls were full of sheep and cattle for the sacrifices.

The priests brought the ark and sacred furniture of the tabernacle and placed them in the temple.

As they withdrew from the holy place a vivid manifestation of the divine presence filled the temple with a luminous cloud and enveloped it in splendor.

Solomon himself was the central figure of the great ceremony and day.

On a platform erected by the brazen altar, arrayed in regal robes, he presided over the service. He delivered an address to the people, and then kneeled and offered the dedicatory prayer.

It is the longest prayer in the Bible, and is a noble and lofty outpouring of adoration, thanksgiving and supplication.

At the close of his prayer Solomon arose and again addressed the people in a benediction in which the strains of the prayer still lingered.

Sacrifices were then offered and the dedication was consummated.

1. A Religious Nation

A great gathering of the people was assembled in Jerusalem. Associated with Solomon were the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, and the princes and the priests.

It was a religious nation, and all those in authority, from the king down to the humblest local official, were interested in having a temple of worship.

It is a good sign when public officials are religious men and are active in promoting religious interests. When the righteous rule the people rejoice.

All the men of Israel were assembled at this religious dedication. Righteous rulers are not enough: righteousness must also extend down through the people.

The duty of being righteous and religious rests upon the humblest citizen as well as upon the king or president.

The nation thus assembled was unified around the temple and ark. It was not commerce or politics or war that compacted and inspired the people on this great occasion, but religion.

Important as are the secular interests of a nation, vastly more vital is its moral and spiritual welfare.

There is need of wisdom in managing the affairs of state at home and abroad, and of enterprise and energy in manufacturing and trade, but far deeper and more far-reaching is the need of interest and earnest-

ness in righteousness and worship. A nation that would only build railways and steamships and skyscrapers and would build no schools and churches would be building on the sand.

Such a nation would sooner or later surely fall, and great would be the fall of it.

The church is the most important building in the community.

2. *The Ark Put in Its Place*

One of the first things that was done on this great day was to bring the ark of the Lord up "unto its place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim.

Its position was central in the temple, the core around which it grew, the heart that gave it life.

The ark should be set in its proper place in our life.

It stands for faith in and fellowship with God, prayer and love and service.

The ark gives us a right standard of values, sets above us a divine ideal, kindles a heavenly vision in our sky, and puts us in right relations with God.

If this ark is in its proper place, everything else will come into its right place also, as the center of the circle pulls every point on the circumference into its true position.

The ark of the Lord has the attractive power of arranging all things around itself in order and harmony.

It will infuse its worship into all our work and will thus bless and beautify all we do.

If the ark of worship is out of its place, everything else will fall out of its proper place also.

If the ark is not in the center of our life, something else will be in its center and on its throne. God will not be first.

A displaced ark means a disarranged and confused life.

We will be using false standards of value and judgment, following low ideals and be in antagonism with God.

Set the ark in its place, put it in the very center of your life, and build all things around it.

Let us keep the ark in its place, and then the ark will keep us in our place, and all life will be harmonious and beautiful and blessed.

3. The Two Tables of Stone

What was in the ark? "The two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb."

These tables contained the Ten Commandments, the fundamental principles and duties of morality and religion.

The ark was but a box in itself, the case that held the jewel, and derived all its value from its contents. Emptied of the Ten Commandments, it became no more than any other common box.

And the value of the Ten Commandments depends on their being written, not simply on tables of stone however richly they may be carved or painted or printed, but also on the tables of the heart.

It is only as they are turned into character and conduct that they have saving virtue and fruitfulness.

The Israelites might have constructed their ark of precious woods and overlaid it with gold and put in it the Ten Commandments engraved on the finest marble, but if they had not kept these commandments in their hearts and lives, they would have availed them nothing.

The pulpit may be viewed as the ark in our Christian churches on which lies the inspired Book that contains the Ten Commandments of Moses and the visions of the prophets and the incomparable sayings of our Lord.

Take that Book away and the pulpit would have no message for the people and its power would be gone.

We must keep the Bible in its place in our ark of worship and pay it the reverence that is its due.

But the Bible has no magical virtue and can save us only as we hide its words in our hearts and turn its commandments into conscience and conduct.

In vain do we build the costliest church and place on its carved oak or polished brass pulpit an elegantly bound Bible, if we do not write the commandments of the Lord on our hearts and keep them in our lives.

4. The Glory of Jehovah

No sooner had the priests put the ark in its place than "the cloud filled the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of Jehovah."

This bright cloud of incense was a symbol of the presence of the Lord.

In this consists the power and glory of every temple of worship. Solomon's temple was a magnificent structure on which had been lavished all the architectural and artistic resources of that day, but without the divine presence it was only a pile of stone.

God manifested his glory in it when it became a means of drawing men in penitence and faith to himself that they might share in his love and life.

Our churches may be ever so costly and stately and beautiful, enriched with all that our art can produce, but they are useless to men and an offense to God if their true glory does not consist in the divine presence and mercy.

Men are to find in the church forgiveness for sin, fellowship with the Father, and brotherhood with one another, and then it will be bright with the glory of God.

Let it be observed that the glory of the Lord did not appear until the priests had put the ark in its place.

Men had to do their part, and then God did his part.

As soon as men had put their last finishing touch on their work, the Lord of the temple stepped into the temple of the Lord and it grew bright with divine glory.

The people must do their part in building the church, the preacher must proclaim the Word of God, all human duties must be fulfilled, and then in and through these human agencies the Spirit of God will work and his glory will fill the place.

The Temple of Jehovah that we are building today is not included within the narrow walls of any church building or cathedral however spacious and grand it may be, but it is the kingdom of God on earth, a Temple wide as the horizon, lofty as the sky and pure as the great white throne of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ laid its foundations in eternity and is himself its chief corner stone and we are to build our lives into its walls as living stones and keep extending its precincts until it covers the earth and gathers into itself all the kingdoms of this world.

It will finally be filled with the glory of a redeemed humanity and this will be the glory of our God.

5. *The Concluding Sacrifice*

The dedicatory service was completed with sacrifice. Twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep were offered.

As only a small portion of each carcass was used in the sacrifice and the rest was eaten, this immense sacrifice is explained by the great numbers of worshippers.

The sacrifice was a symbol of the offering of all possessions and of life itself unto the Lord.

The Jews knew the virtue of worship that cost.

Their religion was not all getting, but it was also giving. Religion that consists simply in getting something from the Lord has only half the truth and does not get half the blessing.

Not only do we have need of the Lord, but the Lord also has need of us.

When we withhold our means we rob God and restrict his grace. Not only do we rob God but we rob and impoverish ourselves, for it is through our service and sacrifice that grace grows within us so that our giving becomes our getting.

Money and property, time and toil, life itself, all are to be laid on the altar of the Lord.

This immense sacrifice was first given to the Lord, and then it was made a means of sustaining life and of fellowship with one another.

The offering to the Lord became life to the people.

Our services and sacrifices are turned into such channels as that they will flow in streams of blessing back into our own lives and then out over the world.

"So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of Jehovah." The greatest day in the history of Israel was completed and crowned with this magnificent sacrifice.

We are living temples of God and have not been properly dedicated until we have presented our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the Solomon temple.
2. Give the history of the ark.
3. How can we write the commandments on our hearts?
4. What is the relation of the glory of God and the good of men?
5. Are there any evidences that the Temple of the Kingdom of God is really rising in the world?
6. What is the value of the church to a community?

LESSON XII—SEPTEMBER 18

The Kingdom Divided

Lesson: I Kings 12:12-20

Golden Text: Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. PROVERBS 16:18.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 1:20-26.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Folly of Pride.
Topic for Young People and Adults: How to Prevent Divisions.

Lesson Text: I Kings 12:12-20

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day.
13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him,
14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.
15 So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah, that he might establish his word, which Jehovah spake by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
16 And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.
17 But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.
18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to taskwork; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.
19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.
20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *A Reasonable Petition.*
2. *An Unreasonable Answer.*
3. *Revolution Lifts Its Head.*
4. *Rehoboam's Vain Effort to Save His Kingdom.*
5. *Jeroboam.*

Solomon was succeeded by his son at a time when the united kingdom of Israel was at its zenith, but disruptive forces were at work that wrought its division and started it on the long decline that ended in the pit of Babylonian captivity.

The division of a country in some instances has good and in other cases evil consequences.

The separation of our country from England was necessary and good, but its division into a northern republic and a southern confederacy would have been an incalculable disaster as the whole country now acknowledges.

The disruption of the Hebrew monarchy developed the vigorous northern tribes into an independence and strength that they might not otherwise have attained, but evils also grew out of the disunion that in time wrecked both kingdoms.

Bad statesmanship and arbitrary despotism and growing grievances brought on the division and final downfall.

Solomon's son and heir was Rehoboam, whose mother was an idolatrous Ammonitess. The fruit of this unholy union was the weak-willed and insolent son that ruined the splendid empire of his father.

A strong and wise hand could have held the kingdom together, but Rehoboam's arrogant spirit and infirm hand let it fall asunder.

The inauguration of the new king took place at Shechem, in the North, instead of at Jerusalem, which shows the preponderating influence of the northern tribes.

1. A Reasonable Petition

The people, through Jeroboam, presented a petition to the king, setting forth their grievances (verse 4).

They recounted the heavy burdens laid upon them by the king's father, asked that these might be lightened, and pledged their loyalty to the king.

The increasing burden of taxation to support the splendid establishment built up by David and still further enlarged and loaded down with still heavier taxation by Solomon resulted in social unrest and political rebellion that found expression in this petition.

The appeal was just in its complaints and moderate in its demands and opened a way for removing evils and binding the nation into unity.

Wise statesmanship would have seized the golden opportunity for composing complaints and planting the throne solidly in the hearts of the people.

Rehoboam took three days to consider the matter, which was a wise step. He first counseled with the old men who had been associated with his father, and they gave him the good advice that he should grant the petition of the discontented people and make them his loyal subjects.

This counsel would have saved the nation, but Rehoboam rejected it, and next heard the young men.

These were a set of fast youth that had grown up in the same circle and atmosphere with Rehoboam and were full of his arrogance and insolence.

They advised him to run the kingdom with a high hand and make his little finger thicker than his father's loins.

The disposition to rush into rash judgment and action is one of the dangers of youth against which young people should be on their guard.

2. An Unreasonable Answer

The misguided king returned an unreasonable answer to this reasonable petition.

He was very insolent and exasperating in his reply, declaring, "I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

Rehoboam played the fool at several points.

He showed his lack of judgment and sense in the advice he followed.

The old men with whom he first counseled had experience and wisdom; they knew the state of the kingdom, the origin of the evils, the heavy burden of the taxes, and the temper of the people.

Their advice was reasonable and just and would have quieted discontent, nipped rebellion in the bud and established the throne.

The young men, whose counsel was next sought, were inexperienced and rash, just the kind of youth that have no respect for the wisdom of age and think they can cut loose from all restraints and run things to suit their own selfish and passionate wills.

That Rehoboam had no more discernment than to reject the counsel of his experienced and constitutional advisers and follow the foolish advice of his hot-headed and dissolute companions shows his lack of sense and his unfitness for the throne.

Many a young man shows his folly in refusing the advice of his father or mother and accepting the counsel of ungodly companions.

Rehoboam further showed his short-sighted judgment in supposing he could spurn the petition and trample upon the rights of his people with impunity.

In dealing with others, especially those that are in any way subject to us, we should be on our guard against an unjust and tyrannical spirit, and should be so patient and sympathetic and helpful that we may win the loyalty of others and make our very enemies our friends.

Conciliation will heal grievances and prevent strife and division in social and industrial relations and in church and state when an imperious and arbitrary policy will work ruin.

3. Revolution Lifts Its Head

In answer to this rash reply of the king the infuriated people raised a cry that has often proved ominous, Revolution!

"What portion have we in David! neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So departed Israel unto their tents."

That was a fateful day for the chosen people that cast its shadow down through many centuries of strife.

The nation was cleft asunder right across its rocky backbone. The kingdom was fissured from east to west, and north and south fell apart. On that little strip of coast, not as large as some of our western counties, henceforth two kingdoms stand facing each other, sometimes in friendly relations but more often in hostile attitudes and bloody strife.

The people of Israel had just grievances.

Judah was the seat of government and culture and art, and the rural people of the north were growing suspicious of it. They were taxed terribly to keep up that splendid establishment in Jerusalem, and Rehoboam's insulting answer was the spark that exploded their wrath in rebellion.

Yet they were too precipitate and were probably wrong in their revolt.

Rehoboam was their lawful king and they were under allegiance to him. He had just come to the throne and should have been given a trial. The splitting of the nation into two hostile fragments was such a fateful far-reaching disaster as should have given its authors pause.

This weakened and wasted the energies of the nation, sowed it with bitterness and passion and unloaded a terrible burden of evil on coming generations.

It is wise to bear with great evils rather than fly to others that may be greater still.

The temptation is often strong with us to resort to violent measures in adjusting grievances. It frequently happens that families, churches, states, are split because grieved members have not the patience to bear and wait.

But such divisions usually create more evil than they cure.

Unity is so great a good, the necessary basis of so many blessings, that we should sacrifice much in order that we may maintain it.

4. Rehoboam's Vain Effort to Save His Kingdom

Rehoboam now realized that his kingdom was breaking in two under his hand, and he took measures to hold it together.

He first sent Adoram, overseer of the public works and a hard taskmaster, to try to keep the ten tribes in the kingdom. But his appearance on the scene only enraged the people, "and all Israel stoned him to death with stones."

The idea of sending the most obnoxious man in the kingdom to appease the people!

This plan shows the blindness of the king, how little he understood the psychology of human nature.

Taxation was the exasperation of the northern farmers and fishermen, and the very sight of the official head and front of the whole hated business called forth violent rage and a volley of stones.

Rehoboam realized that he was losing his kingdom when it was too late.

He now could do nothing but mount his chariot and flee to Jerusalem.

A moderate concession in time might have averted a disaster which a considerable concession, made when the critical point was passed, only precipitated.

Rehoboam, in the day of his reckless disregard of wise counsel and his big talk and insolent tyranny, sinned away his opportunity, and now nothing could save him.

The youth that rejects the teachings of pious parents and walks in the counsel of the ungodly and sits in the seat of the scornful, that thinks he is smart enough to break the laws of life with impunity, in his blindness and folly will lose a kingdom that cannot be recovered with strong crying and tears.

5. Jeroboam

Israel, having raised the standard of revolt against Rehoboam, now rallied around Jeroboam.

He was a man who as a youth had attracted the attention of Solomon as a worker and organizer.

"Solomon saw the young man that he was industrious, and he gave him charge over all the labor of the house of Joseph" (11:28).

This is the step on which many men rise to high position.

They show their ability and efficiency in lower levels of work and are sure to be called up higher. Nearly all of our captains of industry and even of our presidents have risen on these steps of deeds done.

The best way for any one to obtain a higher position is to crowd his present position full of faithful efficient service.

Solomon made Jeroboam the director of public works where he came under the eye of a still more important man than Solomon.

A prophet saw in Jeroboam a coming king and privately apprised him of his destiny (11:29-40).

Solomon heard of this, and Jeroboam had to fly to Egypt to save his life. At Solomon's death, Jeroboam returned and was present in Israel at this critical juncture (12:2-3).

His hour had struck, and the new kingdom gave him the crown by acclamation.

Ability and industry were thus the two hands by which this humble son of a widow climbed to the throne, and the same powers will lift any man upward towards the top.

"All Israel . . . sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel." It was by the action of the people that he was made king.

The government was monarchical in form, but democratic in spirit.

The Bible is a democratic book all the way through, and out of it have come our democratic institutions. It has put down under all

governments and social institutions the basal fact of the brotherhood of man and this has lifted these institutions as rising rocks raise the level of a continent.

It recognizes the essential equality of men in their fundamental human rights, and men inspired with this spirit will not long tolerate despotic kings and forms of government, and such rulers have been having a hard time in our modern world.

This same spirit is also undermining unjust industrial and social inequalities and infusing the spirit of democracy into our whole social fabric.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What were some differences between the northern and the southern tribes that were likely to develop political trouble?
2. What are some causes and what is the cure of friction and strife in the industrial world?
3. Give other instances in which nations have passed through revolutions.
4. When is a revolution wrong and when is it right?
5. What kingdoms may we win or lose and how?

LESSON XIII—SEPTEMBER 25

Review: The Early Kings of Israel

Golden Text: Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. PSALM 103:19.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 105:1-8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Lessons from Samuel, Saul and David.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Honoring God in our Lives and in our Land.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Saul.*
2. *Samuel.*
3. *David.*
4. *Solomon.*
5. *Rehoboam.*

The early period in the history of a nation is especially important and interesting as it lays the foundations on which rises the fabric of its subsequent years, or it is the fountain from which flow the streams of centuries.

This early period is also usually a time of great leaders who rise like mountain peaks to dominate their time and determine the course of events through generations as mountain slopes determine the direction of rivers.

The Hebrew people through their whole history were led and developed and their institutions were shaped by a few great leaders, kings and prophets, and the lessons of this Quarter have been largely the personal history of five or six men.

1. Saul

The people of Israel did not appreciate and live up to the high ideal of the theocracy in which Jehovah was their divine ruler, but demanded a human king. A national assembly was called at which Samuel made

an address in which he depicted the mercy and faithfulness of Jehovah in their past days and showed them that in demanding a king they were rejecting him.

And yet their demand was granted, for God condescends to our human weakness and adapts his providence to our infirmities and failures.

The selection of a king then took place by casting lots, and the lot fell upon Saul.

At first he could not be found, but when he was brought forth he stood up tall and handsome and looked every inch a king. He was received by the people with enthusiastic acclaim and this marked his accession to the crown.

Samuel then wrote the manner of the kingdom in a book, and this may be taken as the first written national constitution of which we have knowledge.

Of course the choice of Saul was not unanimous and "certain worthless fellows" jeered at the new king, but Saul held his peace and when the people demanded that these disloyal men be put to death he displayed magnanimity in sparing their lives.

No one can rule others who does not first rule himself.

2. Samuel

Samuel stands at the parting of the ways between the judges and the kings, closing the old and ushering in the new order of government.

He closes his own administration with a defense of himself, opening the book of his life and challenging any one to find a wrong deed.

The people acknowledged their sin in asking for a king and presented the rare spectacle of a nation making confession of its sin. They prayed that Samuel would intercede for them "that we die not," and national death is an inescapable law written against nations that forget God.

The penitent cry of the people received a gracious response as the prophet assured them that Jehovah would not forsake them if they would walk in "the good and the right way."

Turning from the old, Samuel now introduced the new order of affairs.

He received a divine commission to go to Bethlehem to anoint a successor to Saul, and this filled him with alarm as Saul had now become a desperate character.

Seven sons of Jesse were passed before him in succession, but the elect one was not among them. Finally the youngest, who had been sent to keep the sheep on this occasion as one having no chance for the honor, was found and brought before the prophet who received the divine command, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

Keeping sheep is good training for ruling over men as history has often witnessed.

The Spirit of Jehovah then came mightily upon David.

The shepherd boy had kingly powers in him, but it took divine influences to bring them into disciplined maturity and power.

3. David

David next appears upon the scene in the camp of the Israelites where he had been sent by his father to carry provisions to his brothers.

He found the camp of the Israelites in terror over the defiance of a Philistine giant who dared them to send out a combatant to decide in single battle the issues of the hour.

David offered himself and, having tried in vain to handle Saul's armor, took five smooth stones and at the first throw of his sling sent the huge Goliath tumbling to the ground.

To make sure of his victory he seized the giant's own sword and cut off his head.

No enemy of temptation has been put out of business until we have crushed its skull and decapitated the corpse.

David and Jonathan, son of Saul, now appear in their relation of friendship that has been the praise of all the ages.

They were deeply akin in spirit and were knit together as one soul.

Saul, now seeing in David a rival to the throne, sought to put the boy out of the way, but Jonathan intervened to save him.

In his better moment Saul pledged himself to be true to David, but presently the smoldering fire of his obsession of jealousy and hatred burst out in flames.

David, however, through all his relations with Saul, "behaved himself wisely" and thereby showed his self-control and wisdom.

The whirligig of events turned rapidly and next we find Saul in David's power as the king slept in his camp and David stole in upon him.

David exercised noble self-restraint in saving the king, but he could not refrain from taunting Saul's general who slept and thereby endangered his king's life.

David held a conversation with Saul across a mountain ravine and brought the king to his senses again and to penitence. At last we find David in possession of the crown, but it was not yet secured by the support of all the people.

He first went to his own tribe and was anointed over the house of Judah and thus had secured his home base.

Next he adroitly opened the way for winning the support of the North by sending a message of appreciation to the men of Jabesh-gilead for the way in which they had treated the body of Saul slain at Gilboa.

As a result of his policy of conciliation all the tribes came to Hebron and pledged their loyalty to David and thus he was established on his throne over a unified nation.

David was now secure in his crown and began to turn his attention to things more spiritual.

The ark was still in captivity and he took steps for its return to Israel. Finally it was brought with a great procession up to Jerusalem amidst songs and shoutings, David himself composing a notable national hymn for the occasion.

A further religious project now engaged David.

He dwelt in a palace, but the ark in a tent.

Ought not the house of God to bear some proportion to the palace of the king and the homes of the people?

Yet his good purpose encountered a prohibition from Jehovah, for the time was not ripe for such a costly undertaking and David was not the proper man to do it.

However this divine prohibition did not extend into the next generation and David's plan should yet come to its completion.

Jehovah would build David a house and yet David's house also turned out to be the house of Jehovah, so that our house and God's house should be one and the same dwelling place.

What David was not permitted to do he was promised his son would do, and many a father begins a work which his son will finish, many a mother dreams a dream which a son or daughter will realize.

We part with David in these lessons in a scene in which he is exposed as guilty of a dark crime which is one of the blackest blots on the pages of the whole Bible.

When confronted with a portrait of himself, he did not recognize it and had the mask torn off his face with the terrible announcement, "Thou art the man!"

Yet David displayed his better nature in repentance as sincere as it was bitter.

No sin is so dark that it cannot be cleansed away in the great fountain of divine mercy.

4. Solomon

David passes and we find Solomon in his place.

In a dream scene we are given an insight into the deeper workings of his heart.

There was offered him any gift he might choose, and this opened a dazzling prospect comparable with that with which Satan tempted Jesus when he offered him the whole world.

Solomon made a confession of his childlike dependence that is still a proper estimate of man in all his pride. He then made a request for an understanding heart, a choice which has elicited the admiration of all the world.

An understanding heart is a fountain of all streams of good and a safeguard against all evil.

It is a prayer the wisest and strongest of men should still offer.

Solomon carried through the great project of building the temple and celebrated its dedication at the Feast of Tabernacles. The ark was put in its place as the core and center of the sacred building, and in this box were the two tables of stone on which were engraved the Ten Commandments.

The ark of faith and worship should be central in our lives and its commandments should be written on our hearts and wrought into our unconscious habits so that they will be our spirit and our speech.

The glory of Jehovah symbolized in a bright cloud of incense then filled the temple and its true purpose was fulfilled.

In vain do we build churches, however costly and beautiful, if they are not filled with the glory of God and the spirit of peace and good will among men.

The great day was concluded and the dedication consummated in a great sacrifice that signified that the people consecrated all their possessions to the service of Jehovah.

A cheap religion is worth no more than it costs, and we measure and express our sense of the worth of our worship and of our God by the degree and spirit of our giving.

5. Rehoboam

Happy and rare is the nation that can have an unbroken succession of great leaders, and few dynasties run long until they run into weakness or worse.

Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam, offspring of an unhappy heathen marriage, and he soon displayed his folly.

The people grew restless under increased taxation and the northern tribes cherished deep financial and social grievances against Judah and its great establishment at Jerusalem.

They presented a petition to the new king which was moderate and reasonable in its demands, but Rehoboam in his rashness took counsel with some of his wild companions and returned an arrogant answer of refusal accompanied with threats of heavier burdens.

Revolt lifted its head and the men of the North, now known as Israel, withdrew to their tents and proclaimed Jeroboam their king.

He was the son of a widow who had worked his way up into national notice by his ability and faithful service.

In vain did Rehoboam try to put down the rebellion by sending to them his chief taskmaster, the most unpopular man in his kingdom, and so he fled in his chariot to Jerusalem while Jeroboam assumed the crown of Israel.

Some men sin away their day of grace.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the life of Saul.
2. Give an account of the life of David.
3. What is the place of great men in national history?
4. Name some points in which this Hebrew history is specially applicable to our own country.
5. Name some political principles and dangers illustrated in this Quarter.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH QUARTER

The Fourth Quarter carries on the story of the Early Kings and Prophets of Israel, which was begun in the Third Quarter. Both the Southern and the Northern kingdoms were on the decline during this period and Israel went into captivity and Judah, lasting more than a century longer, then went to the same doom.

There are few great kings in this period but there are great prophets, and these men of vision and courage stand out like mountain peaks.

Elijah appears in the North as a fiery prophet of judgment who yet was taught that God operates more efficiently through gentle forces than through earthquake and fire.

He was succeeded by Elisha a milder man, and then Amos appears upon the scene, a farmer-prophet who spoke in blunt speech and spared not rich sinners. Hosea, out of his own sorrowful experience, taught the people the patience and tenderness of God and painted beautiful pictures of the goodness and mercy of Jehovah. Micah, a minor prophet of Judah, was also a rural preacher of plain speech, who called his people to judgment and also gave one of the finest definitions of religion found in the Bible and in all literature.

The story is then lighted up with the appearance of the great prophet Isaiah, a poet-prophet of blazing imagination and style whose pages are splendid literature.

He prophesied near the end of Judah when the Assyrians were thundering at her gates.

He was a statesman-prophet, handling great problems of national and international affairs and yet also coming down into everyday life and dealing with prevailing sins and moral duties.

He could counsel with Hezekiah the king when he was stricken with panic at the approach and demands of Sennacherib, for the prophet has divine insight and foresight where the king may be blind, and under his guidance the king offered a prayer that was answered with a marvelous deliverance.

The history passes through stirring scenes in which kings and prophets play their part and Jehovah rules over all. Its web is woven of human and divine threads intermingled so as to show how they work together in all the affairs of our world.

As we study it little ingenuity is required to translate it all into our own day and duties.

FOURTH QUARTER

Early Kings and Prophets of Israel
From Samuel to Isaiah
(Second Half of a Six Months' Course)

LESSON I—OCTOBER 2

Elijah on Mount Carmel

Lesson: I Kings 18:30-39

Golden Text: Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Joshua 24:15.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 115:1-3, 9-11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Standing for God Against the Crowd.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Courage of Conviction.

Lesson Text: I Kings 18:30-39

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Jehovah came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt-offering, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time: and they did it the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Failure of the False Prophets.

2. Elijah's Preparation for the Trial.
3. The Prophet's Prayer.
4. Fire from Heaven.
5. A Tragic Ending.

On Carmel's crown now swarms a countless throng,
With one brave soul to stand 'gainst millions in the wrong.

Another long stride along the range of Jewish history brings us to the times of Ahab and Elijah in the northern kingdom.

Things have gone from bad to worse in Israel.

Wicked Ahab and his still more wicked Phenician wife Jezebel, who introduced her immoral Baal worship into Israel, had brought religion and morals to a dreadful pass, and judgment was poured out upon the land in the form of famine. Three years of drouth had burned the land to a desert and the people were in the last extremity of distress.

The time had come to strike a decisive blow for the abolishment of idolatry and the restoration of the true worship of Jehovah. The fruit of the famine was to be reaped in a harvest of faith.

1. The Failure of the False Prophets

Elijah was ordered out of his retreat into active service.

The prophet met the king and repelled the charge of being the troubler of Israel by boldly branding this guilt on Ahab himself. Elijah now proposed to Ahab a trial of the relative truth and power of the worship of Baal and the worship of Jehovah.

The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were to place a bullock on an altar and pray to their god to consume it, and Elijah was to do the same: "and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

This test was in accordance with the ideas of the age, and was fair and conclusive.

The central mountain range that runs through Palestine like a spinal column, when it comes to the plain of Esdraelon, turns to the northwest, plunges seaward and buries its rocky roots in the blue Mediterranean.

On the top of this giant altar the grand trial took place.

The summit at one point is a broad plateau, in full view on every side of distant portions of the land, and is set in a mighty frame of mountain, plain and sea, a vast theater apparently built for just such a solemn and momentous spectacle. Close to its base flows the Kishon, and on its slope is a mountain pool that persists through the severest drouth.

On the appointed day a great multitude assembled, and the trial was on.

The prophets of Baal built their pile of wood, put their bullock upon it and began to call upon their god. All day long they cried ceaselessly and cut themselves with knives, while Elijah mocked them and with keen irony taunted their helpless god.

No answer came; the heavens had no tongue of flame for such cries.

False religions have been given full time and opportunity to show what they can do.

Where is the country they have cleansed, the souls they have sanctified, the fire they have drawn from heaven?

Has materialism, or agnosticism, or any form of skepticism any worthy fruits to show? Superstition and unbelief have no divine fire that can burn away a single sin.

2. Elijah's Preparation for the Trial

Elijah's time was now come. The sun was westering and its leve rays glowed on Carmel's crown.

The false prophets ceased their clamorous cries, a hush fell upon the multitude and Elijah spoke.

He called upon the people to come near, and the circle of the throng pressed closer. He then repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down, probably one of the altars of Jehovah destroyed by Jezebel.

Repairing the altar of the Lord is a good way to begin reform.

The nation that has forgotten God must take its first step by returning to his altar. A weakened and distracted church may find the cause of its trouble in a fallen altar of prayer. A neglected family altar is the root of weakness and worldliness in many a Christian home.

Repair your altar and make it strong and beautiful in the worship of the Lord.

In rebuilding the altar Elijah took twelve stones, symbolizing the twelve tribes to whom God had given the name Israel.

This act was a silent but powerful appeal to the unity of the nation that lay deeper and broader than the unhappy division of the tribes.

In this supreme trial the prophet would have the disrupted nation unified around the altar of the true God.

This appeal would touch a deep rich chord in the hearts of the people, and wake the music of the olden days and ancient glory.

In repairing a fallen altar, be sure that you also repair broken fellowships and strained relations.

Heal your divisions and strifes and be of one mind. A family or church can worship better at an altar in which every member is represented by a stone or other symbol.

Elijah next dug a trench around the altar, put wood on the stones and a bullock on the wood, and then poured jar after jar of water over it until it was drenched and saturated and the trench was full.

Why was this? To shut out the possibility of deception and fraud, which were frequently practiced in connection with such affairs.

Elijah would show the people beyond doubt that there was no delusion in it, and that the fire came from heaven, not from earth.

Christianity did not originate in a corner, but in the open day. It has no cunningly devised fables and clever tricks with which

to deceive the world, but it blazons its reality in many infallible proofs and its central miracle of the resurrection of its Lord was enacted in the light of the fullest publicity.

3. The Prophet's Prayer

All things were now ready and Elijah made his appeal unto his God. At the time of the evening sacrifice the prophet drew near and said, "O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

This is one of the loftiest prayers in the Bible, inspired in its logic and language, concentrated and definite in its aim, pure in its purpose and mighty in its appeal and power.

After the insensate cries of the false prophets, it must have fallen upon the silent and awed multitude like a solemn majestic strain of music, awakening thoughts and memories too deep for tears.

In appealing to the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel," Elijah aroused the national consciousness of the past and set these potent personages to praying with him; all the mighty dead crowded their supplications into this cry.

In our prayers we appeal to the "God of our fathers," and thereby take our stand upon his faithfulness to past generations, and thus we turn all the voices of the dead and all the centuries of Christian history into one mighty prayer.

Elijah's prayer was definite and pointed in its aim. Our prayers are often split into too many petitions and wander around in aimless vagueness.

We do not pray as we ought because we do not know what we want and still less what we need.

The prophet had an intense consciousness of one need and concentrated his purpose and prayer into one petition. His one petition

was that God should be glorified in making Israel to know him as their God, and Elijah as his servant, and in turning the heart of the people back to himself.

There was nothing selfish, small and short-lived in this prayer, but it was cast upon large lines and looked straight away from human self-interest and vanity to divine glory manifesting itself in human blessing.

Our prayers should not seize upon petty personal points, but lay hold on large things and aim at divine ideals, and then we may pray with a prophet's passion and power.

4. Fire from Heaven

As lightning out of a cloudless sky fell fire from heaven and burnt up the offering and the wood, cracked and pulverized the stones and licked the water and the very dust out of the trench.

The miracle had an overpowering effect upon the people, who fell upon their knees and cried, "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God."

This miraculous answer to prayer becomes natural and easy of belief when it is set in the frame of its great national environment and spiritual purpose.

A supreme crisis in the history of the chosen people called for and justified an extraordinary manifestation of the divine presence and power in order to save them and through them save the world from the degradation of sensual idolatry.

Thus fell the immoral and shameless worship of a heathen god in Israel and thus the chosen people were recovered to the true and pure worship.

Nothing else goes so deep into life of a people as its religion, and it either lifts them towards holiness or sinks them into the flesh.

Christianity has its mighty works that attest its divine origin, and its Lord is declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. It has fire from heaven that has power to cleanse everything it touches into the beauty of holiness

5. A Tragic Ending

The great trial had a tragic ending. At Elijah's command the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were seized and hurried down to the plain, and the Kishon was crimsoned with their blood; not one of them escaped.

Is this the way to deal with false prophets? Not in our day.

Our lines are fallen in a more advanced age of moral development when rational measures are more efficient and are sufficient. We may now wield only the sword of the Spirit which is the word of truth for the overthrow of error.

Death for heresy has had its day, and our victories are now spiritual and not carnal.

Elijah was a prophet of his age and could not rise far above its level.

In his day, also, coarser and more radical measures may have been expedient.

Idolatry was a dreadful cancer in Israel that had to be cut out with a knife or it would have infected and poisoned the whole body unto death.

These false prophets were such unclean creatures that Elijah thought they should be exterminated. He believed that it was necessary that they should die in order that Israel might live as a nation and propagate true religion in the world. Did not Rome believe that Carthage, a nest of this same vile religion, should be destroyed? All false prophets and impenitent souls incur guilt that must result in retribution; for the universe is organized in the interest of righteousness and against evil, and it is written in the very laws of life that the soul that sinneth shall die.

This spiritual death is deeper and more fearful than any physical death of the body.

We still have false prophets and some of them are as unclean in their doctrines and deeds as the prophets of Baal.

They swarm in heathen countries and infest Christian lands and especially cities and they imperil our morals and our whole social fabric.

Shallow and foolish people that are ready to run after every self-styled prophet are especially susceptible to their wiles.

We also have the great vices and cancers in our Christian civilization which we must ever fight as we should fight the devil himself.

We must put on the whole armor of God against these evils and quit ourselves in this battle like men and be good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an outline of the history from Jeroboam to Ahab.
2. Is there any truth and good in heathen religions?
3. Does God ever hear the prayers of pagans?
4. What are the points of a good prayer?
5. What fire does God send down upon us?
6. How should we deal with false prophets?

LESSON II—OCTOBER 9

Elijah Hears God's Voice

Lesson: I Kings 19:9-18

Golden Text: Wait for Jehovah: be strong and let thy heart take courage. PSALM 27:14.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 57:1-5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Listening to God's Voice.

Topic for Young People and Adults: How God Speaks to Men.

Lesson Text: I Kings 19:9-18

9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

10 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

14 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria;

16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

17 And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

18 Yet will I leave *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Panic-Stricken Prophet.

2. A Despondent Prophet.

3. Wind, Earthquake and Fire.
4. A Prophet Sent Back to His Work.
5. Unconscious Influence.

Elijah's triumph on Carmel was followed by swift reaction. In answer to the prophet's prayer the drouth was broken in drenching rain. Ahab was bidden to return in haste lest he be overtaken by the storm, while Elijah, fleet as an Arab, ran as a courier before him.

Arrived at the palace Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had slain all the prophets of Baal with the sword.

The king was a weaker character than his wicked wife and did not know what action to take until he had consulted her. Jezebel knew.

The tigress flew into a passion of rage at the news and swore that she would have Elijah's life within twenty-four hours.

1. A Panic-Stricken Prophet

This message threw the prophet into a panic, and, taking his servant, he started on a run down through Israel and Judah and never stopped until he got to Beersheba on the edge of the desert, a hundred miles away.

The brave prophet of Jehovah who had boldly defied Ahab and dared to stand single-handed against a hostile throng on Carmel now collapsed and fled affrighted at the word of a woman!

Should he not have endeavored to rally his forces and secure the fruits of his victory in recovering Israel from apostasy? The greatest opportunity of his life was now before him. But when the crisis of duty and danger came, he did not trust God to carry him through, but deserted his post and fled as a fugitive into the wilderness.

Yet all the powers, physical and spiritual, of the prophet had been strained far beyond the ordinary range of human endurance, and it is no wonder that at last the tense cords snapped.

Sometimes when we are in despondency the cause of it may be in our exhausted physical condition.

2. *A Despondent Prophet*

Forty days' further flight brought Elijah to Horeb, the mount of God, where in the solitude and silence of a cave he heard the divine voice asking, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

There is a slight tone of surprise and implied reproof in this question, as though the prophet were out of his proper place and needed to give account of himself.

Elijah answered that he had been very jealous for Jehovah, whose altars the children of Israel had thrown down and whose prophets they had slain, ending with the pathetic plaint, "and I, even I only, am left."

We have here a deeper cause of Elijah's despondency than his physical exhaustion. He was laboring under a sense of disappointment, defeat and loneliness.

He had expected to accomplish a great revolution and reform in Israel. Patiently he had waited through the famine and boldly had he faced Ahab. On Carmel he had won a startling triumph. He then thought the hour had come when the people would forsake idolatry and go back to the worship of Jehovah.

But suddenly the tide turned and all was lost in defeat and flight.

In the depth of his despair the last star of hope was blotted out and he thought he was the only good man left; and he would soon be gone. The prophet projected this inner gloom abroad over Israel and then saw it wrapped in thick darkness.

His own flight loomed up as God's failure.

Defeat and disappointment after an initial success are particularly hard upon our faith and hope.

In such a state we are apt to see all things through our own gloom. We begin to suspect the faith and faithfulness of others and take pessimistic views of the church and the world. Really, good men are few;

and to be perfectly frank, there is only about one left and he is not feeling very well himself!

Such views are largely subjective and are only the shadows cast by our own melancholy moods. Stop thinking that way and the depression may vanish.

3. Wind, Earthquake and Fire

This complaint drew from Jehovah a sublime answer. A mighty wind shivered the rocks, an earthquake shook the solid mountains, and the lightnings flashed and blazed.

These were the outriders of God's power and majesty, but they were not God.

Then there was "a still small voice." And Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and stood in reverent waiting. What was the meaning of this tremendous manifestation?

One meaning was that God was still alive and had lost none of his power.

Elijah in his despair had forgotten this and acted as though God were dead. Jehovah let loose his mighty Arm and smote right and left about Elijah, and falling mountain walls and blazing bolts of fire proved to the prophet that God still reigned.

This is a central truth that we need to keep alive in our minds and hearts.

Despondency may have its root in doubt. We lose a vivid sense of God's presence and power and then we begin to fear that the world is falling to pieces.

Because we are defeated we think God has failed.

But the Lord's hand is not shortened that he cannot save, and tottering mountains and burning suns attest his power to do his pleasure.

A further meaning in this display was that God does not do his best work through violent forces but through gentle influences.

Elijah trusted to fire and sword to cleanse the land of idolatry and reform the people. A temporary victory was thus accomplished, but no radical and permanent reformation was achieved.

God intimated to him that softer and slower means must be used. Reason's voice must be heard and conscience must be convinced.

The stillest forces are ever the mightiest. A hammer can shiver ice into a thousand pieces, but every piece is still ice. Only the gentle sunshine can kiss and melt it into sweet water.

The lightning's flash and the thunder's roar are only an infinitesimal fraction of the immeasureable electric energy that lies invisible and silent in the air and is always working beneficent results.

We would like to grasp the lightning with which to destroy evil and establish the kingdom of God. We are impatient to seize the sword and cut matters short in righteousness.

But few are the questions that the sword can settle, as all the world now knows. It can kill the body but it cannot convince the mind. The Great War has changed few minds anywhere in the world.

Powder can blow up a fort, but it cannot win a convert.

Jesus told his disciple to put up his sword, and not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit speaking in the gentlest voice are the the grandest victories won.

4. A Prophet Sent Back to His Work

Again the question was put to Elijah, what was he doing there, and again he uttered his complaint of defeat and failure.

Jehovah answered him this time, "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel."

This throws further light on Elijah's despondency. One of its roots was his idleness as the result of his desertion of his post of duty.

He had been engaged in urgent and exciting work in Israel, running hither and thither with the swiftness of a nomad, meeting great issues and winning decisive victories. Suddenly he let go of his work and fled into the desert where he had nothing to do but to brood over his failure.

His restless spirit could not lie idle, and life became a burden to him from its very emptiness. He would rather die than do nothing.

"Get back to your work," was God's pedagogic prescription to Elijah at this point.

This was an effective cure for Elijah, for after his return to his work we hear no more of his despondency. Never again did he think that he was the only good man left and say he wanted to die.

Inactivity may often be the cause of despondency with us.

Idleness is emptiness that is full of the devil.

Our faculties are hungering for action, and vigorous exercise will send joy into our hearts. Idle people are generally the most discontented people, and many a person is eating his own heart out in morbid despondency because he has nothing to do.

Whenever you find yourself sitting idle and discouraged hear God's command, "Get back to your work and lend a helping hand."

Get out of your self-contained inner stagnation into outer usefulness, and the sunshine will disperse the cloud. Teach some child, and you may anoint some coming king or coming one of great usefulness.

The earnest active Christian, always doing something for the Master, is rarely despondent.

5. Unconscious Influence

Elijah prayed that he might die, and this prayer was forgotten by the Lord, but the prophet's passing was foreshadowed in the command,

"and Elijah the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room."

There was one man left in Israel good enough in God's estimation to become his successor.

We need not worry that God cannot find men to take our place and carry on our work after we are gone. He has plenty of reserve forces and our going will not leave as large a gap as we may think.

Another flash of light was also thrown upon the pessimistic complaint of Elijah that he was the only faithful prophet and good man left in Israel. With a touch of gentle irony Jehovah said, "Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

Seven thousand faithful souls that Elijah in his blindness had not counted when he thought he was the only true worshiper! Seven thousand had been sustained by his heroic faith, so much wider was his unconscious influence than he himself knew!

Is it not even so with our pessimistic views of the world? At times we are disposed to think that all things are degenerating in business, government, religion. The world has just been wrecked in the greatest war of history and it appears to have carried all things down in its universal cataclysm.

The church has been weakened and piety is on the decline, it is declared with such frequent iteration that we are inclined to believe it. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Yes. The faithful in all lands are more in number than we know, and the purpose of God is ever increasing with the process of the suns.

"Why are thou cast down, O my soul? and why are thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Everyone's unconscious influence is wider than he knows.

When Carlyle had completed the first volume of the *French Revolution* he loaned the manuscript to a friend, who sat reading it far into the night and left it lying on the table, and the next morning the housemaid found the loose mass of paper and kindled the fire with it and so it went up in flames, like the French Revolution itself.

When Carlyle was told the fatal news he sat for days in despondency and despair. One morning sitting at his window and looking out over acres of London roofs he saw a bricklayer at work, tapping each brick affectionately with his trowel and singing blithe as a lark. "Poor fool," said Carlyle, "how canst thou be so happy with all things rushing into the inane?" Then he bethought himself and said, "Poor fool thou, rather, who sittest here complaining when thou shouldst be at work." Then he arose and washed his face and felt himself anointed and went back to his work, and the *French Revolution* got finished again.

That humble London bricklayer never knew that his hand helped to write that literary masterpiece, and we may never know how widely our example and influence may reach out and help other lives, even as Elijah unknown to himself helped to sustain seven thousand in Israel.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What relation has our bodily condition to our spiritual state?
2. Can we find God in nature?
3. Are we often idle because we are looking for the wrong kind of work?
4. Give other instances of unconscious influence.

LESSON III—OCTOBER 16

Elijah in Naboth's Vineyard

Lesson: I Kings 21:5-10, 16-20

Golden Text: *Be sure your sin will find you out.* NUMBERS 32-23.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 94:17-23.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Rebuke of Wrong.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Exposing Official Corruption.

Lesson Text: I Kings 21:5-10, 16-20

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread.

6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, *and* that dwelt with Naboth.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

10 And set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him to death.

16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17 And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy. And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A Discontented King.*
2. *A Wicked Wife.*
3. *An Infamous Plot.*
4. *An Iniquitous Triumph.*
5. *A Dreadful Doom.*

We have here a glimpse into the private life of Ahab, and it matches his public life, revealing its hidden roots of unrestrained selfishness and wickedness.

Ahab had a royal palace at Jezreel on Mount Gilboa overlooking the picturesque valley of Esdraelon. Adjoining his estate was the vineyard of a Jewish peasant, Naboth.

Ahab wanted this land to enlarge his pleasure grounds and to convert it into a flower garden. He offered Naboth a better vineyard elsewhere or a liberal price for it.

Naboth declined to sell the inheritance of his fathers at any price. Possibly he regarded such a sale as contrary to law (Numbers 35:7) and refused on religious grounds. At any rate, the paternal estate was dear to him as the old homestead, it suited him, and he was unwilling to remove.

So far the negotiation was honest and fair.

Ahab had a right to desire to get the land and to offer to buy it, and Naboth had a right to desire to keep the land and to refuse to sell it.

But two men wanted the same thing, and this is the root of most of the strife of the world.

1. A Discontented King

At this point trouble begins. Ahab went home from his fruitless interview with Naboth in a sullen mood, threw himself on his bed in a fit of sulks, turned his face to the wall, and refused to eat.

A fine condition for a king to be in and all because he could not get possession of a little property of one of the meanest of his subjects!

All he could see out of his palace window was that peasant's vineyard. He was blind to the magnificent scenery of the Esdraelon valley and the surrounding mountains because that small piece of ground lying under his casement window inflamed his eyes and embittered his soul. All his royal estates and palaces, all his dignity and power as

king, the whole length and breadth of his kingdom could not make him happy as long as he lacked that bit of land.

To this depth of misery can covetousness and discontent bring us.

Contentment consists in looking on the things we have and appreciating and developing and enjoying them, and discontent grows out of looking on the things we do not have and inordinately desiring them.

Contentment is not a matter of wealth and large possessions, for the rich experience as much discontent as the poor; and the king may be the most miserable man in his own kingdom.

Covetousness is desire uncontrolled by conscience.

Beware of such desire: it contains in itself the seeds of every unholy passion and lawless deed.

2. A Wicked Wife

Jezebel came in and found Ahab sulking on his bed. She inquired what was the matter, and Ahab told her his story of disappointment at the hand of a peasant.

The proud queen's lips curled in fine scorn and contempt at the sight of such a king.

Did he really rule the kingdom of Israel? Then why should he lie there in churlish petulance and impotence, like a simpering fool? Let him get up and eat and be merry.

She will show him how to get that vineyard!

Naboth the Jezreelite shall be an obstruction slight as a spider's thread to her imperious will.

The striking feature of her character in this transaction is her utter lack of conscience.

She was wholly blind to any element of right or wrong in the matter. All she saw was that Naboth had a vineyard which Ahab wanted: the only thing to do was to take it; what was he whimpering about?

There is a great deal of this kind of blindness in the world.

When men see things they want, the question of right or wrong often becomes secondary and may be wholly crowded out of view. Might is generally believed to make right among nations, and many a man acts on the same principle.

It is hard to look justly and dispassionately on an object when we are looking at something others have and we want.

This is a principle that goes deep into our personal relations and business affairs and into the whole social order.

Ahab was dragged into this wickedness by his wife.

He had some little conscience in the case which she contemptuously canceled and then she ruthlessly snatched the coveted prize.

Is not many a man driven into speculation and embezzlement because he has in his home a devotee of fashion who is ever imperiously demanding more money?

Has not many a husband been enmeshed in his wife's laces and strangled by her ribbons?

An ambitious selfish spirit in the home may reach out and work sad ruin in the world.

3. An Infamous Plot

Jezebel set her cunning wits to work and soon compassed her wicked end.

She wrote letters stamped with the king's seal to the elders or authorities of Jezreel explaining and enjoining her plan.

They were to begin well by proclaiming a fast—religion was to cloak this crime in sanctity. They were to arrest Naboth and put him in the criminal's dock and brand him with a terrible charge.

What was this charge to be? "Thou didst curse God and the king," an abhorrent thing to every Jew and especially to this honest and pious peasant.

How was the evidence for such a charge to be found? Easily enough—make it.

Get two worthless fellows that will testify to anything for a little money and put them up against Naboth. Then carry him out and stone him to death.

Thus wrote this Lucrezia Borgia to these Jewish elders.

No deadlier poison was ever compounded, no sharper dagger was ever whetted against an unsuspecting and innocent victim. The letter hisses with the tongues of a thousand serpents. Hypocrisy, lying, perjury, ferocity, murder are all coiled up in it and ready to strike with their fatal fangs.

The plot was carried out to the letter.

The elders, subservient tools of wicked rulers, proclaimed the fast and thereby suborned religion to play the part of a perjurer. Naboth was seized, charged with blasphemy, condemned and stoned. The conspiracy was put through in short order and word was sent back to Jezebel that "Naboth is stoned, and is dead."

An honest innocent man, working his own vineyard and worshipping his God, was hurried off from his home and family and presently lay a mangled mass of flesh to gratify a covetous king's greed and a wicked woman's spite.

Strange things happen in this world.

Some terrible jolt has thrown it out of joint. Nothing is too hideous and horrible for depraved human hearts to conceive and ruthless human hands to execute.

The blood of the innocent often cries from the ground and justice seems to have fled or fallen asleep.

But let us possess our souls in patience. The God of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps, and the end is not yet.

4. An Iniquitous Triumph

Jezebel, having received the news, was now ready to fulfil her promise to Ahab. "Arise," she said, "take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

What an air of triumph breathes through her words, of contempt for Naboth and of scarcely concealed contempt for the pusillanimous king who had failed and feared to do what she had so easily done.

"Which he refused to give thee for money," a refusal which she thought the king ought not to have tolerated and which she quickly smothered in Naboth's own blood. "Which he refused to give thee for money," a refusal which this woman could not understand, for she thought every man had his price.

But there are some things a man ought never to sell and that money cannot buy. Your honesty and honor, your faith and your faithfulness, sell them not.

Jezebel could not understand Naboth, but she could put him out of the way. "Take possession of the vineyard," she said, "for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

Naboth, she thought, was all that stood in the way of taking the vineyard.

No principle of justice and right, no conscience, no retribution, no God stood in the way.

"Naboth is dead"—how conclusive seemed her logic and how sure her triumph! How many things do we think we have put out of the way because we think they are no longer alive but dead?

Often men put conscience out of their way by hushing its voice, it may be by an act of injustice or even in blood, but again the end is not yet.

5. *A Dreadful Doom*

"And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it." Ahab was either too conscientious or too cowardly to do such a deed himself, but he was not conscientious or brave enough to refuse the fruits of such a crime after it was committed.

Many a man who would not steal himself will yet take stolen goods. Many people are trying to keep themselves free from the public exposure of sin while they are yet enjoying the fruits of sin.

Let not the man that embezzles money blame the fault on his fashionable wife: he stole that money himself.

How exultingly Ahab went down into that vineyard that day! Already he could see those vines rooted up and all that rocky slope set with rare plants in full bloom. No more would that vineyard be a blot on the landscape as he looked out of his palace window, but it would be a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

But what did Ahab see, whom did he meet in that vineyard? He met Elijah!

Elijah the prophet of fire and judgment stood there, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?" "Thus saith Jehovah, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." The dogs should also eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel.

In that stolen vineyard Ahab heard his own dreadful doom and that of his wicked wife and saw with his mind's eye his own splattered blood.

All this came to pass when Ahab was slain in battle and "the dogs licked up his blood . . . . according unto the word of Jehovah which he spake" (22:37-38), and on the day when Jezebel with her painted face looked out of the palace window and was hurled down to the hungry dogs who left only a handful of bones (II Kings 9:30-37).

After all there is justice in the world, and sooner or later it comes to its day.

Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The clouds of injustice and oppression and violence may grow dark and threatening and the great Avenger may seem careless, yet "behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

It is easy and it gives us peculiar satisfaction to join in judgment on such grave crimes in this distant age or on such terrible deeds in our own day. But the pure and dispassionate Emerson said that he had never heard of a crime that he himself might not have committed, and the germs of all evil are lurking in our hearts.

Had it not been for the grace of God we ourselves might be guilty of such deeds.

We are especially subject to the social sin of not respecting the rights of others.

We may infringe upon their rights in various ways, their rights of reputation and of personality and even their property rights. The golden rule should strictly apply to all our social relations and we should be careful and earnest in doing unto others as we would have others do unto us.

Only on this basis can we live together in common welfare, and any other basis will involve us in ruin.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. On what grounds, if any, can the private ownership of land be justified?
2. In what sense is all private property a public trust?
3. Are women as bad as men?
4. Does not iniquity sometimes seem to triumph even in the end?
5. How do evil doers eat of the fruit of their own doings?

LESSON IV—OCTOBER 23

The Call of the Prophet

Lesson: I Kings 19:19-20; Amos 7:14-15; Isaiah 6:1-8

Golden Text: And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I, send me. ISAIAH 6:8.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 40:5-10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Spirit of the Volunteer.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Need for Modern Prophets.

Lesson Text: I Kings 19:19-20; Amos 7:14-15; Isaiah 6:1-8

19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed over unto him, and cast his mantle upon him.

20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee.

14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees:

15 And Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven.

8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us Then I said, Here am I; send me.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. How Prophets Were Called.

2. A Splendid Vision.

3. A Man of Unclean Lips.
4. Unclean Lips Purified.
5. A Call to Service.

Prophets were preachers. They declared the will of God and applied it to the people and conditions of their day.

Sometimes they looked into the future and predicted events to come, but this was only a small part of their work and they were mostly concerned with their own time.

They dealt with affairs of state as well as of religion and often were the leading statesmen of their day.

While they were called of the Lord, yet they also rose to their commanding position and influence by their superior ability and insight and foresight; and they were also men of fearless spirit and dared to stand against the majority and oppose popular opinion and at times pronounced terrible judgments on their people.

In the sight of the people they were clothed with divine authority and they preached with tremendous power.

Many of them yet stand up in that little country and that far age so tall and commanding that we can see them sharply etched against their time, and we study them and find their words are still weighted with wisdom and worth for us.

The world needs prophets today as much as ever, and all Christian men of vision and leadership are called to this office.

1. How Prophets Were Called

We have in our lesson interesting glimpses into how prophets were called.

Elijah, after his return from Horeb, found Elisha as he was plowing with oxen and cast his prophet's mantle upon him, and the young farmer left his oxen and ran after the prophet, requesting, however, that he might first go and kiss his father and mother good-bye.

Elisha was a man of a different type and temperament from that of Elijah, but he was a worthy successor and carried on his work in Israel.

Amos was a shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees in the kingdom of Judah who traveled north into the kingdom of Israel and there exercised his ministry.

Though not trained in a theological school, this farmer-prophet, like Elisha, was called of the Spirit to preach.

His sermons are pointedly and pungently practical and abound in homely phrases and figures of speech drawn from rustic life. Amos was a bold and fearless prophet and uttered piercing and powerful denunciations against the prevailing evils of his day.

He struck sin in high places and spared not the rich and powerful. Were he a pastor in some of our wealthy churches today he would likely have trouble and complaint would be made to his bishop that "he offends some of our best people."

Elisha and Amos received their calls out in the fields, but Isaiah, the great prophet of Judah, received his in the temple accompanied with splendid manifestations of the divine presence and glory.

Prophets were thus called from various walks and conditions of life and in various ways.

No one class had a monopoly of this office and no set form conferred the privilege.

Learned and unlearned, high and low, God can use them all.

The chief requisite for this service today is a spirit tuned into harmony with God to catch every accent of his voice and a spirit of obedience to follow his guidance.

2. A Splendid Vision

Isaiah was the greatest of the Hebrew prophet-preachers. He lived Jerusalem and his ministry extended through the reigns of four ngs and a period of sixty years. He began in the reign of Uzziah hen Judah was enjoying a high degree of prosperity.

This outward splendor, however, was only the thin gilding that concealed inward corruption, and the faithless nation was staggering towards its fall.

Isaiah saw the falseness and rottenness of prince and priest and people and spared them not.

In the first five chapters of his book he holds up the mirror to his time and shows us a terrible reflection. In the last part of the third chapter is a perfect picture of Parisian fashion and frivolity and folly, and the whole discourse has a modern tone and squarely strikes the sins of today.

Through these clouds of guilt shoot lightning flashes of wrath and retribution.

In the sixth chapter the prophet gives us his divine call and mission, the heavenly vision which, like that of Paul, transfigured his life and inspired him for heroic service and suffering.

Isaiah saw his vision in a temple. That is a good place to see visions.

Down in the dust and clamor of the market, out in the whirl of society we are not likely to see any ideal that will transfigure life.

But in the house of worship messages are heard and aspirations are kindled that lift us far above this world and give life new vision and meaning.

The prophet saw Jehovah on his throne, his rightful place, where he always has been and will be, the central and supreme Ruler of the world.

His train spread through the temple, the royal robes of his glory flowed from him and filled the place.

Seraphim hovered around him veiling their feet and faces with two pairs of wings to express their reverence and to shield themselves from the intolerable splendor and using a third pair to fly as ministering spirits everywhere at the divine bidding.

Man is the top of this world, but not of all worlds. Far above him in the unseen are bright spirits that flock close to the throne of God and burn with glory.

What was the character of this mysterious Person the prophet saw so exalted and splendid? On this everything depends. "And one cried unto another, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

Holy character—that is the true crown and glory of Jehovah: now let him reign; the universe is safe.

Infinite wisdom, power and splendor, add these up and they do not make God; add love, and still the sum is incomplete; add justice and purity and truth, holiness of character, and now we have God.

This was the vision of the prophet that raised him to a new plane of being and transfigured his life.

Low and poor and barren is the life that has no divine vision to lift it up and idealize it. Lofty and strong and rich is the life that has caught such a vision and is carried up on its wings.

3. A Man of Unclean Lips

The prophet was instantly smitten with a sense of sin. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

He did not go out from that vision filled with a spirit of pride and vanity because of what he had seen, boasting of his experience, exalting himself over others because of his special privilege, but he humbled himself in the dust.

This is the proper effect of superior privilege and power anywhere but especially in the presence of God.

It is an awful thing to see the holy God and Father of us all, and then look with pride and scorn upon our fellowmen.

Why was the prophet seized with a sense of sin? No word of condemnation had been spoken, Jehovah had not so much as cast upon

him a doubtful glance, not the least allusion had been made to his lips that now seemed clogged with uncleanness.

"For mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts."

The mere vision of Jehovah had made his sense of sin vivid, the splendor of the divine holiness had revealed and intensified the spots and specks of his human guilt.

In the night all discolorations and defects are concealed: the sun brings them to light and discloses their stains and deformities.

We need only step into the presence of God and become vividly conscious of the whiteness of his holiness to see how spotted and saturated with sin we are.

In the presence of Jesus no word of condemnation need be spoken, our own hearts condemn us, and we can only cry, "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner."

The prophet should first be aware of his own sinfulness.

4. Unclean Lips Purified

How was the prophet's cry of unclean lips received? Did a holy angel smite him down or a flash of Jehovah's anger consume him? No, swift as a beam of light a seraph flew with a burning coal from the altar, and touching the prophet's mouth with it, said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven."

The prophet's sin was not denied or even palliated: his guilty conscience told him the truth; he was unfit for that holy presence.

Yet he was not dealt with as his sin deserved and thrust into outer darkness, but his penitential guilt was forgiven and burned away.

Those unclean lips were purged and made vocal with holiness. The prophet was here so close to God that the intermediary ritual of the temple was done away and the cleansing fire of sacrifice was directly applied to his lips.

God is a consuming fire against sin, and yet if we are penitent his fire will burn away our sin and leave us purified but unharmed.

The prophet's lips were the means of his ministry, and there it seemed to him that all his guilt was congested and therefore were they cleansed.

The lips are a true expression of the whole nature.

There our guilt gathers and finds an outlet, and there it must be cleansed away. Few habits are more vile than foul speech, few sins are worse than unclean lips.

And no habit is more significant of good character and is a more beautiful accomplishment than pure and choice speech. "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in network of silver."

5. *A Call to Service*

The prophet now heard a voice calling for volunteers for service. "And I heard a voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me."

The Lord calls human beings to go for him and do his work, the Creator needs the creature, Omnipotence needs the help of finite weakness.

The steam must have its cylinder, the river its channel, and the electric current its conducting wire.

God has power enough, but he needs conductors.

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and made disciples of all the nations."

This is ever the divine logic.

God has many tasks waiting to be done in the field and factory, in business and the professions, in the home and school and church, and to this service we are called.

Immediately after he was forgiven and purified Isaiah heard the voice of Jehovah and was given a work to do, and it will not be long after we have experienced pardoning grace that we shall hear the call to service.

One must have his hearing dulled with worldliness and sin that cannot hear this call in this great day of service, but purified souls hear it clear and strong.

"Here am I; send me," instantly responded the prophet. His vibrant soul answered back quick and clear as a struck bell.

All great souls wear this mark of unquestioning obedience, going out not knowing whither they go.

Not until we simply hear the voice of the Lord and commit ourselves to his path shall we find power and patience and peace.

We are saved to serve, and only in our service shall we fulfill our mission and reap the full reward of the Christian life.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give instances of how other prophets and apostles were called.
2. What visions of the Lord may we see?
3. Are there any fields specially calling for workers today?
4. Why must we be cleansed before we can serve?
5. How did Paul treat his heavenly vision?

LESSON V—OCTOBER 30

Amos Denounces Sin

(World's Temperance Sunday)

Lesson: Amos 2:4-12

Golden Text: Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah God, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Amos 5:14.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 15:1-5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why the Drink Traffic is Prohibited.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Intemperance and Associated Evils.

Lesson Text: Amos 2:4-12

4 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Judah, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah, and have not kept his statutes, and their lies have caused them to err, after which their fathers did walk.

5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

6 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes—

7 They that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father go unto the *same* maiden, to profane my holy name:

8 And they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined.

9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

10 Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah.

12 But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Judgment of Judah.***
2. ***The Judgment of Israel.***
3. ***Warnings from History.***
4. ***Prophets Raised Up.***
5. ***The Prophets Corrupted.***

Amos, as we have seen, was a shepherd-prophet of Judah who migrated into Israel and there carried on his prophetic work.

The date of Amos is about 760 B.C. when the prosperity attained under Jeroboam II had produced a state of luxury and license that resulted in grave moral and religious disorders.

Amos was a man of Puritanic soul and fearless spirit who had a passionate love of righteousness and hated injustice and oppression. The poor were being ground into the earth and the rich were running riot in debauchery.

Amos flamed in his wrath against the social conditions of his day and smoothed not his rough sharp speech in exposing and condemning them.

We have in this passage a specimen of "the social gospel" applied with a penetrating eye and an unsparing hand.

1. The Judgment of Judah

Although Amos was up in Israel and had evil enough to engage his attention, yet he took time to look back upon Judah and found no patriotic pride or comfort in what he saw there.

On the whole Judah had remained truer to its ancestral religion and training and had not gone off after immoral heathen religions as Israel had done. Yet its record is bad enough as it had been infected with the Phenician idolatry introduced into Israel and had not remained faithful to Jehovah.

Amos gave only a glance to Judah but it was a swift and fierce one that cut to the core of things like a sword.

Three and four times had Judah transgressed.

Not once only did it forget God, but again and again it had repeated its sin until it grew into a habit.

This is the fatal nature of all sin.

It does not stop with the first guilty act, however it may shock the soul and embitter it with remorse, but it comes back with keener craving and gets a deeper grip on the soul.

Intemperance is notoriously a sin of this kind.

The first glass may be distasteful and the first debauch may leave remorseful regrets, but "I will seek it yet again" (Prov. 23:35) is the feeling that comes back, and the logical end of that road is a drunkard's grave.

All sin is thus self-propagating and "for three transgressions" and "for four" God "will not turn away the punishment thereof."

The root and sum of Judah's sin was that they "rejected the law of Jehovah."

This law was expressed in the legislation of Moses and had been explained and applied by the prophets and was the special privilege of Judah.

They had light and leading and were without excuse.

Deeper was their guilt than that of the heathen nations around them, because they fell from a greater height of privilege. Jerusalem was the holiest city on earth and yet in its very streets "their lies have caused them to err, after which their fathers did walk."

"The Law of Jehovah" is still the law of life in keeping of which there is life more abundant and in disobedience to which there is degeneration and death.

The laws of health are included, along with all other laws, in "the law of Jehovah," and therefore abstinence from intoxication is enjoined as a condition of life.

As a consequence of this sin, Amos declared the judgment of Jehovah, "I will send fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem." Special privilege did not spare Jerusalem but only increased its condemnation and brought fire upon the chosen city. Especially did this fire "devour the palaces of Jerusalem," the scenes of the guiltiest social sins.

If the rich despise the laws of God and man and oppress the poor, one day these oppressed classes may burn their palaces.

A city of churches must obey the laws of righteousness or the judgment of God will strike and burn these very churches.

2. *The Judgment of Israel*

From Judah the prophet now turns his prophetic insight and scorching judgment upon Israel.

It also had repeated its sins three and four times and had grown brazen and hardened in its iniquity.

Official corruption and social injustice had here run to an extreme limit of oppression.

They "sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes," which refers to the custom of seizing the poor for debt and selling them into slavery, even when the debt was so paltry a matter as a pair of old shoes. They panted "after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor," which may mean that they tramped the poor down into the dust. They turned "aside the way of the meek," or crowded the poor and humble people out of their way, and they were guilty of shameless indecency. They used the very garments of the poor which they had seized and were illegally keeping over night (Exodus 22:26) as a bed on which to lie beside the altar, and in the very house of God they drank wine purchased with money extorted by unjust judgment.

All sense of righteousness and justice and morality and social decency was lost by these Israelites who were sodden in luxury and license and shameless pagan rites.

All these sins have strikingly modern forms.

Wealth and luxury and power, fashion and pleasure, sensual license and excitement, social injustice and the oppression of the poor, are still prominent features of our modern Babylons.

Human nature has not changed in one of its fibres or atoms since the days of these rich and sodden and wicked Israelites.

And against these people also Jehovah declared, "I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

Both of these judgments against Judah and Israel were fulfilled when first the Assyrians attacked Samaria and its walls fell and its people were carried into terrible captivity (722 B.C.), and then

when the Babylonians (568 B.C.) razed the walls of Jerusalem and sent a conflagration blazing through its palaces.

God's arm is not shortened and not less destructive is sin in our day, nor less terrible its judgment.

3. The Warnings of History

As usual with the prophets, Amos, speaking in the name of Jehovah, appeals to history as a witness against the people unfaithful to their God.

Jehovah had destroyed before them the Amorites when they were driven out of the land though they were as giants in stature and strength; root and branch had they been cleared from the land.

These Amorites had been dispossessed because they had polluted the land with their immoral idolatry and made their presence intolerable, and now did the Israelites think they could walk in the same ways with the Amorites and repeat all their sins and not reap the same harvest of judgment?

It is always easy for us to look back even with some complacency upon the fall of corrupt cities and nations in the past, as though we were exempt from such guilt and safe against any such retribution.

Yet we may be treading the same path of social injustice and immoral degeneracy and therefore heading towards the same ruin.

The laws of God do not change with the centuries and as they have turned history into a vast graveyard of fallen empires and republics, so will they bury us, if we are unfaithful to these laws, in the same grave.

The guilt of Israel was increased by the fact that Jehovah had brought them up out of Egypt and led them forty years in the wilderness and finally brought them into the promised land.

This history of good providence was always appealed to as a reason why the chosen people should remain faithful to God and should realize their guilt when they went astray.

No nation has a history so marked with the goodness of God as we have.

No other people on earth can repeat with such fulness of meaning as can we, "He hath not dealt so with any nation" (Ps. 147:20).

Because we have been so peculiarly and richly blessed we should strive to keep our inheritance uncorrupted, pure and strong.

This is a great national reason why we should outlaw the drink traffic and maintain our prohibition law.

Intoxication is the greatest foe of our modern nations, poisoning and burning out their vitality, breeding all other social sins and diseases, and tending to tumble them as corpses into the graveyard of ruin.

We have had warnings enough from history and have enough of the special kindness of God to keep us from this path.

4. Prophets Raised Up

"And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah." Of course it was so and they could not deny it.

Time and again in both the Old and the New Testaments God appeals to our own judgment that he has done the right and good thing for us, and the guilt of our unfaithfulness and fall is on us.

Israel in spite of its degeneracy had had prophets raised up out of its young men of vision and light and leading, such as Elijah and Elisha and Micaiah and Jonah.

Never do things come to such a bad pass that God does not have a few souls to bear witness for him and some of them are men of spiritual genius and power.

In the night of Egyptian darkness he found Moses, in Israel and Judah he found Elijah and Isaiah, in the Dark Ages he found Saint Francis and Savonarola, in the Sixteenth century he raised up Luther and in dark hours in America he raised up Washington and Lincoln.

In our day there are prophets who see spiritual light caught from the face of God in Jesus Christ and proclaim it in clear compelling tones to the world.

Ministers and missionaries, scholars and apostles of truth, are pushing the frontiers of the kingdom of God out over the world. No other generation ever had light and guidance as clear and abundant as ours.

And as our light is, so is our responsibility.

In particular, no other generation had as clear and convincing scientific and social knowledge as to the evil effects of intoxicating drink as we have, and we sin against this light at our guilt and peril.

"To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

5. *The Prophets Corrupted*

The darkest blot is at this point put upon this record.

"But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not."

The Nazirites were a special class "separated," as the word means, from a life of luxury and indulgence as a protest and safeguard against such prevailing evils (Numbers 6:1-21).

They thus stood in the midst of society beset with these dangers as an example of abstinence.

These degenerate Israelites sodden and sunk in the flesh now tempted and corrupted these men of austere life and dragged them down to their own level.

They also threatened the prophets, telling them to shut their mouths and keep quiet.

Is this all ancient history?

Are there not strong influences today in high circles to corrupt pure youth and to tempt the very ministers of religion to bow to and serve the liquor traffic?

Are there not men of financial power and social standing who even dare to invade the pulpit and tell the minister what to say and especially what not to say?

The loyal friends of law and temperance and religion must be watchful against such foes and be ready to resist them.

And let the prophets of our day beware of those who would bid and threaten them, saying, "Prophesy not." They will sell their very souls if they listen to such voices.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Have the scientific and social reasons for personal abstinence and public prohibition lost their truth and force?
2. What are the facts as to the working of the prohibition law?
3. Should it be relaxed or more strictly enforced?
4. What interests are working for its annulment?
5. What are some of the special dangers attending the ministry today?

LESSON VI—NOVEMBER 6

Amos Pleads for Justice

Lesson: Amos 5:1-2, 10-15, 21-24

Golden Text: Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Amos 5:24.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 21:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Stand for God Against the Crowd.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Conditions of Divine Approval.

Lesson Text: Amos 5:1-2, 10-15, 21-24

Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel.

2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is cast down upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

10 They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

11 Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.

12 For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins—ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate *from their right.*

13 Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

22 Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.

23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

24 But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Fallen Yet Hating Reproof.***
2. ***Manifold Transgressions.***
3. ***Seeking Good.***
4. ***Despised Feasts.***
5. ***Righteousness as a River.***

The northern kingdom under Jeroboam II rose to the height of its prosperity and power, but it was also honeycombed with corruption and saturated with sensuality.

Great wealth had been piled up as a crushing burden on the poor, and the bitter cry of the oppressed filled the land.

There was a condition of social inequality and unrest that was an ominous foreboding of an explosion and collapse.

Into the midst of this moral and social condition Amos, a plain farmer and fearless reformer, stepped and began to denounce iniquity in high places and low in burning words.

The sheep farmer was unlearned in the schools, but he had communed with nature (4:13, 5:8) and with God until his soul was steeped in high thoughts and holy resolutions, and he spoke in blunt pungent speech that was the highest eloquence.

Such a man is always ready to stand against the crowd.

1. Fallen Yet Hating Reproof

The prophet lifts his lamentation against the house of Israel in solemn rhythmic tones that roll like a funeral dirge out over the land. He pronounces judgment as though it were fully accomplished. "The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is cast down upon her own land; there is none to raise her up."

Idealizing the past the prophet designates the northern kingdom as "the virgin of Israel," but looking forward he declares it "is fallen," and fallen upon her own land with none "to raise her up."

"Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment" (I Tim. 5:24), their fate sealed before final sentence is declared, and it was so with Israel.

Virgin strength and purity will not save a nation or an individual that afterwards treads the broad downward road.

What was one reason for this incorrigible degeneracy and wickedness of Israel? "They hate him that reproveth in the way, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly."

Amos knew from bitter experience that they hated him for his unsparing reproof and upright speech, and yet he was but doing his duty and fulfilling his divine commission in his reproof and plain words.

The prophet must often be a reprover, and this is hardly ever a popular occupation, however truly and kindly it may be done.

How seldom are sinners and even saints willing to take reproof? Do we not all bristle up at such words and begin to exculpate ourselves and find fault with the censor?

And yet is not reproof often our warning and safeguard and is not an unwillingness to hear it a sign of wilful wrong and possibly of a hardened heart that is even "past feeling?"

Not to be aware of disease is the most fatal symptom of some diseases, such as leprosy which may be fatally rooted in the blood with no consciousness of it on the part of the victim.

It is a bad sign in children when they will not receive and profit by correction from their parents, and any one who holds himself above reproof may be in a state in which he mocks at sin and is a fool.

2. Manifold Transgressions

The prophet now run his sharp sword through the social condition of the time and disclosed a state of affairs that was ominous with danger.

Officials were turning judgment to injustice and trampling down righteousness to the earth.

The courts of law that should have been fountains of equity and righteousness and peace were sending forth streams of injustice and bitterness that were poisoning all the life of the people. Taxes were grinding down the poor. The dishonest and rapacious officials were

extorting "exactions from him of the wheat," a common mode of oppression in the East where the tax gatherer takes a heavy share of the harvest to this day.

With these unrighteous spoils the rich were building "houses of hewn stone," palaces compared with the humble dwellings of the common people, and were planting "pleasant vineyards" that they might live in luxury and dissipation.

The result of this injustice and oppression would be that they should not live in their stone palaces and should not drink of the wine of their vineyards.

Such a social state could not endure, it was rotten at the root, and all its scarlet blossoms would go up in dust.

And it did. The Assyrian colossus came with giant strides across the sands of the desert and crushed Israel as an egg under his foot.

Amos foresaw this and he dared to stand out against the crowd in uttering his warning words.

The problem of the rich and the poor is ever with us, and at times it becomes loaded with dynamite that threatens to blow society to pieces. Stone palaces filled with luxury and dissipation that are believed to be built on the very blood and bones of oppressed classes on the one side, and packed tenements groaning with misery on the other, face each other like storm clouds that threaten to rush together in a violent collision and explosion.

It should be the business of every one of us, as much as in him lies, to abate and prevent these conditions.

In so far as these frightful inequalities are due to injustice that law can control and remove, such law should be framed and enforced; and in so far as they are due to the personal fault of people, both rich and poor, we should endeavor to reach their hearts with better thoughts and a spirit of good will.

The gospel of Christ is the great remedy for these social as for all other evils.

3. Seeking Good

The reiterated message of the prophet is, "Seek good and not evil that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the land: and it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." This is the remedy for all evil that sounds through the whole Bible, whether it be spoken by Isaiah or Amos or Jesus or Paul. A mere negative condition of the heart emptied of evil is not enough: the heart must be filled with good.

The way to crowd evil out is to crowd good in.

The way to keep immune from disease is to be full of health; life is the great antagonist of death. The way to keep out of the company of the devil is to keep in the company of the Lord.

The prophet had already warned Israel against its besetting sin and the root of all its social wickedness: its degenerate and immoral religion. "Seek ye me, and ye shall live," he had told them (4-5); but "seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba." These were hotbeds of pagan worship, and corruption and death were its fruits and end.

Simply to enter into Gilgal may ensnare our feet in its seductive web; to pass by Beersheba may lure us into its trap.

Simply to enter a saloon for some men is to be lost, and for all men subject to its temptation is danger and folly.

There are places where no one can enter and come out unsoiled.

The intensifying of the sense of personal responsibility is one of the needs of our day where we think that we can hide ourselves in a crowd and have little personal duty or guilt. These fat corrupt officials in Israel thought they were safe in their oppressions because there was no one to call them to account.

But the plain farmer of Tekoa told them that the blazing eye of Jehovah was upon them and that they would have to answer to him and it might be amidst falling walls and blazing palaces.

This wholesome truth should ever be present with us. Let no one think, whether he be high official or common citizen, that he can hide his misdeeds and escape their just retribution, for every one of us shall give account of himself unto God.

4. Despised Feasts

But were not these Israelites religious? Were they not maintaining a great establishment of worship with high feasts and offerings and choral song accompanied with "the melody of viols?"

Verily they were, but what did Jehovah say on this point?

Here he grew furious and sarcastic in denunciation. "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your assemblies."

Their very worship was their worst offence.

Jehovah despised it and ordered it taken out of his sight. He would none of their offerings, nor would he listen to their songs and stringed instruments however artistic and rich might be their melody. Their music was only so much noise that jarred and jangled on his sense of fitness in worship.

This also is only an illustration of the general fact that the best things are the worst when prostituted to bad ends.

Religion the world over is subject to this law.

One of the worst things in many heathen countries is their religion which revolts all our ideas of rationality and righteousness and decency.

The thing that caused the deepest distress to Jesus was not the Roman oppression or the poverty or even the social sins of his day, but it was the religion of the Pharisees and Sadducees with its splendid temple and ritual, ostentatious and punctilious on all petty points of outward observance, but inwardly full of hypocrisy and oppression and hatred and bitterness; outwardly whited sepulchres but inwardly full of dead men's bones.

On this religion he poured out his wrath and called these religionists to their face serpents and vipers!

And has all this hypocritical and offensive religion passed out of our churches?

May there not be Christian churches that have stately buildings with an elaborate service and artistic music that yet are so devoid of the real spirit of Christ that if Jesus himself in his carpenter clothes were to appear in them as an unknown stranger he might be given the cold shoulder and even be unceremoniously thrust out? The very music that is so pleasing to us and in which we may have such pride may be displeasing to God and he may even be saying, "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."

But the penitence of a broken and a contrite heart is the sweetest music to his ear. Let every Christian ponder this in his own heart.

5. Righteousness as a River

Is God, then, hard to please? Must we bring him costly offerings which only a few can afford?

Not so. He wants what we all can give in abundance and we can give it without money and without price.

Let justice roll through our lives and through our streets as waters, and righteousness flow as a mighty river through our social order and our nation and world, and we shall be pure and peaceable, prosperous and happy, all our lives will be music, and God will be satisfied.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are we so unwilling to receive reproof?
2. Is the world growing worse or better?
3. Why is good not more attractive to us?
4. Is there danger of making fine music an end rather than a means in our church worship?
5. Is there as much need and as brave service for men who will stand against the crowd today as ever?

LESSON VII—NOVEMBER 13

Hosea Preaches God's Love

Lesson: Hosea 11 1-4, 8-9, 14:4-8

Golden Text: I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings. HOSEA 6:6.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 36:5-10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Unchanging Love of God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Loving Kindness of God.

Lesson Text: Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9; 14:4-8

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

2 The more *the prophets* called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

3 Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboiim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him.

5 I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as* the grain, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

8 Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***When Israel Was a Child.***
2. ***Wayward Children.***
3. ***Drawn with the Cords of a Man.***
4. ***Backsliding Healed.***
5. ***Dew upon Israel.***
6. ***Beauty as the Olive Tree.***
7. ***An Appeal to the Wise.***

Hosea lived in the Northern Kingdom during the last days of Jeroboam II, when the splendors of his brilliant reign were beginning to fade into the night of decadent national and religious life, ending in the midnight of captivity.

The prophet in his domestic relations was a man of sorrow with the sharpest grief.

But his affliction was the means by which God taught him to know the patience and tenderness of his own love towards his chosen people and towards the world.

1. When Israel Was a Child

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

As the eye of God swept around over all that vast and glittering expanse of empires he did not choose one of the great and the rich and the strong.

There off to the East lay Babylon, standing erect with massive limbs and grasping in his sword the promise and potency of world power. Down to the South lay Egypt, "wrapt in the rich and jeweled web of centuries," which we are just now unwrapping and our eyes are dazzled as we look upon the splendor packed away in those deep rock-tombs, stretching in languid ease along the Nile and basking under the shadows of colossal Temple and Pyramid. The Hittites to the North had a cultured and powerful empire and off to the West the Phenicians were ploughing the blue Mediterranean with their ships and forming the characters that now are our alphabet.

Yet none of these did Jehovah select to be his peculiar people, but he chose a slave child in Egypt making bricks without straw in bitter bondage.

It is ever so. "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are

despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are nought, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God."

It is the handicapped or defective child that excites our sympathy, and we have caught this compassion from him who took little children into his arms and blessed them, and from Jehovah who loved Israel when a slave child in Egypt.

2. Wayward Children

Yes "the more the prophets called them, the more they went from them." The slave child when delivered from bondage and brought up into his own land and given freedom and power, showed ingratitude and turned against the very Heart that loved him and Hand that led him.

Israel in its own land grew rich and proud and then forgot Jehovah and fell into idolatry and sensuality and was plunging down the steep road to captivity.

It is a picture of many a nation that in its day of small things and weakness and hard conditions worshiped God and nurtured virtue, and then in the days of its strength and wealth forsook God and rotted in its pride and self-indulgence.

We are all wayward children and often slip down this path.

God has chosen us and set his love upon us in his great goodness, and he has sent us prophets and teachers and surrounded us with all the blessings of a Christian land.

But how often is it true that the more his prophets call us the more we turn from them; the greater is our light the less is our faithfulness in love and service.

The very fact that God hath dealt with our own country so bounteously is our peril.

3. Drawn with the Cords of a Man

But the patience of Jehovah failed not with his unfaithful child. "Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with the cords of a man,

with bands of love: and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them."

The figure is that of the driver of oxen who adjusts the yoke so that it does not chafe their necks and gives them food when wearied and exhausted and controls them with gentle cords that are bands of love.

It is a beautiful picture of God's tender care for us in our waywardness, as though he got down by our side and lightened the load on our necks by putting his own shoulder under the burden.

"A man has a mystic power," says George Adam Smith, "of a very wonderful nature upon the animals over whom he is placed. On any of these wintry roads of ours we may see it, when a kind carter gets down at a hill, and, throwing the reins on his beast's neck, will come to its head and touch it with his bare hands, and speak to it as if it were his fellow; till the deep eyes fill with light, and out of these things, so much weaker than itself, a torch, a glance, a word, there will come to it new strength to pull the stranded wagon onward. The man is as God to the beast, coming down to help it, and it almost makes the beast human that he does so. Not otherwise does Hosea feel the help which God gives his own on the weary hills of life. We need not discipline, for our work is discipline enough, and the cares we carry themselves keep us straight and steady. But we need sympathy and gentleness—this very humanity which the prophet attributes to our God."

"Let no one judge this incredible that God comes and takes us by the hand; through the mystic power which is above us, but which makes us like itself, we are lifted to our task. Let no one judge this incredible. The incredible would be that our God should prove any less to us than a merciful man to his beast."

4. Backsliding Healed

Jehovah agonizes over his wayward children and cannot give them up. His compassions are kindled and he will not execute the fierceness of his anger. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."

God's anger must burn against the impenitent, but it is instantly turned from the contrite soul.

There is a wideness in his mercy that will cover and cleanse our broadest and deepest sins. His mercy works healing. Our sins have cut and slashed our souls with a thousand stabs and wounds that bleed and smart and would end in death.

But his gracious Spirit applies the balm of pardon and peace that heals these wounds and restores health. He not only heals, but he loves freely.

The great Physician is our personal Friend whose affection is his best medicine, a Father who draws his sick child close to his bosom of love.

5. Dew upon Israel

The prophet now grows poetic as he describes still further the blessing of the Lord upon Israel his penitent people.

He will be as the dew upon Israel.

Dew falls gently as a kiss of heaven upon drooping plants to cool and refresh them. Even when the rain withholds its baptism of life for many weeks and vegetation burns under a fiery sun, the gentle dew secretes its precious mist and drops out of the night air to saturate leaf and blade and keep the world green.

So God's spirit finds us in every weary time when our spirit grows faint and imparts to us refreshing influences that revive and cheer us.

Under this dew Israel shall blossom as the lily that robes itself in the whiteness of God's holiness.

Every Christian shall blossom and bear the fruits of the Spirit.

But the lily is a frail plant and its blooms easily wither: does this also represent righteous Israel?

No, he shall cast forth his roots like Lebanon that go down under the everlasting mountains and bury themselves in the bosom of the planet.

So the righteous soul, though it may seem fragile and easily crushed, yet has roots that are indestructible and eternal, for they lay hold on the Rock of Ages.

6. Beauty as the Olive Tree

Nature is taxed at many points to furnish figures and images that shall shadow forth the fruitage and beauty of righteous Israel. "His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." "The olive," says Ruskin, that poet-preacher of nature, "is one of the most characteristic and beautiful features of all southern scenery. The hoary dimness of its delicate foliage, subdued and faint of hue, as if the ashes of Gethsemane had been cast upon it forever; the gnarled writhing of its intricate branches, and the pointed fretwork of its light and narrow leaves, inlaid on the blue field of the sky, and the small, rosy-white stars of its spring blossoming, and the beads of sable fruit scattered by autumn along its topmost boughs—the right, in Israel, of the stranger, the fatherless and the widow—and, more than all, the softness of the mantle, silvery grey, and tender like the down on a bird's breast, with which, far away, it veils the undulations of the mountains," are its characteristics.

So should righteous Israel revive as the corn and blossom as the vine, and its scent should be as the wine of Lebanon.

Such beauty should adorn the Christian. God is beautiful and as we attain his image the beauty of his holiness should be upon us in all virtue and strength, courage and courtesy, kindness and tenderness and love.

The Christian has no right to be unlovely and ugly in his manners and speech and spirit, but should be clothed with grace and beautiful in his soul.

7. An Appeal to the Wise

The prophet closes his book with an appeal to men to be wise and walk in the right way. "Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein."

What is wisdom but insight to penetrate to the heart of these spiritual laws and see that they are the ways of life?

Men may be wise along other lines, be able to drop their plummet to the center of the earth, or throw their net into the star-springled heavens and catch suns and systems, be wise in learning's lore, or know how to master markets so as to make all the world pay them tribute, and yet be fools walking in the blindness of their folly. What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

True wisdom sees deeper than the passing fashion of this world into the spiritual and eternal.

It lays its treasures up above and lives under the power of the world to come. Even prudence dictates a policy that has a wider basis and a more substantial foundation than the momentary present.

Worldliness catches only at every passing profit or fleeting pleasure and has no thought for tomorrow, but wisdom reaches through the years and grasps the far-off interest of faith.

In choosing our path through the world we should consider the end thereof and find a road that will run without encountering an unbridged chasm or break all the way through into the eternal city.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the life and work of Hosea.
2. In what respects are we all still children?
3. Has any good come out of slavery?
4. How can we become aware of our own sins?
5. What is wisdom as contrasted with knowledge?

LESSON VIII—NOVEMBER 20

Micah Champions the Oppressed

Lesson: Micah 2:1-3; 6:1-13

Golden Text: He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God. MICAH 6:8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What God Requires of Us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Prophetic Interpretations of Religion.

Lesson Text: Micah 2:1-3; 6:1-13

Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.
2 And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.
3 Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily; for it is an evil time.

Hear ye now what Jehovah saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.
2 Hear, O ye mountains, Jehovah's controversy, and ye enduring foundations of the earth; for Jehovah hath a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.
3 O my people, what have I done unto thee and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.
4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him; *remember* from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous acts of Jehovah.
6 Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old?
7 Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?
9 The voice of Jehovah crieth unto the city, and *the man of* wisdom will see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.
10 Are there yet treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and a scant measure that is abominable?
11 Shall I be pure with wicked balances, and with a bag of deceitful weights?
12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.
13 Therefore I also have smitten thee with a grievous wound; I have made thee desolate because of thy sins.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Judah Devises Iniquity.*
2. *Jehovah Devises Judgment.*
3. *Jehovah Contends with His People.*
4. *The People's Answer.*
5. *Jehovah's Requirement.*

Micah was a minor prophet who was a contemporary of Isaiah and lived in the country south of Jerusalem.

The times were out of joint, oppression distressed the land at home and foreign foes were coming up against it.

Micah's sympathies were with the poor, and "pinched-faced peasants peer between all his words." Gifted with imagination and a graphic style he delivered powerful sermons and produced some of the sublimest passages of the Old Testament.

We have two characteristic specimens of his preaching in this lesson in which the wickedness of Judah is depicted in glaring colors, judgment in captivity is foreshadowed, and one of the finest definitions of "religion pure and undefiled" in the whole Bible is given.

1. Judah Devises Iniquity

Woe is pronounced upon them "that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds!"

Some sins are impulsive, born of a sudden gust of provocation or passion, and other sins are cool and deliberate, calmly thought out and all the means adapted to the evil end.

These Jews as they lay upon their beds in the silent hours of the night, when honest men are asleep or when in wakeful hours conscience is usually most sensitive, deliberately devised wicked schemes for robbing their neighbors and defrauding the poor.

Such deliberation always increases the guilt of crime and some men become expert and indurated in such "malice prepense" so that conscience is dead and they are past feeling in sin.

Having devised iniquity upon their beds these Jews next logically "when the morning is light practice it."

That is the psychology and logic of evil, as it is of good.

Ideas urge us into action, thinking leads to doing. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.

If we would not do evil we must not think evil.

We cannot cherish evil thoughts and feelings in our heart and keep them out of our character and conduct, for they will inevitably infiltrate into our spirit and speech and action.

When a man thus grows "wise to do evil" he is far gone in sin.

The evil these men of Judah devised and then practiced was land grabbing, one of the oldest evils in the world.

They would first covet fields and then seize them, desire leaping into deed.

They would covet a house and then take it away, oppressing "a man and his house, even a man and his heritage," or the old family farm that was so dear to him.

Land has always been an object of covetous desire on the part of men, and it is at the bottom of many individual and social wrongs and has been the cause of innumerable wars and revolutions.

There appears to be something in the possession of land that breeds land hunger so that the more of it a man has the more he wants. How to administer the land is often one of the most serious problems and responsibilities of government, as is the case just now in England.

Covetousness in all its forms is one of the most insidious c sins and we should be on our guard against it.

Once we let our desires inordinately fasten on an object the may grow into a passion that will try to sweep everything out c its path and break down every principle of right and wrong.

It is a poison that infects the whole life. "Take heed, and kee yourselves from all covetousness."

2. Jehovah Devises Judgment

While the men of Judah were devising iniquity, Jehovah was doin some devising also.

The prophet all through these passages represents Jehovah a acting in a quite human way and thus accommodates the divin action to human form and comprehension.

"Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold, against this family do devise an evil."

Whatever God does of course he "devises," for he does nothing blindly and capriciously without forethought and plan.

But does he "devise evil"? So speaks the prophet, and there is n new difficulty in this. God does not devise evil in the sense that h plans and leads us into any evil; in no sense does he cause our guilt but he does devise the judgments that must attend our wrong thinkin and doing, and this is the meaning of Jehovah in this case. The "punish ment fits the crime," and so it should.

We try to make it do so in the domestic discipline of our children and the law and the courts through long experimentation have trie and are trying to do this.

God's laws carry their penalties in their own bosom and ar self-operative.

Isaiah, speaking to these same people of Jerusalem, said to them "The show of their countenance doth witness against them: and the declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! fo

they have done evil unto themselves. Say ye of the righteous, that it shall be well with them; for they shall eat the fruit of their own doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for what his hands have done shall be done unto him" (3:9-11).

Every evil doer's hand is against himself as well as against his neighbor and he works out his own retribution.

The evil or punishment Jehovah devised against Judah was captivity, the logical result of their social rottenness. "I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily." This yoke was the Babylonian captivity and already the iron foot of that cruel conqueror was marching across the desert and presently would kick down the gates and walls of Jerusalem and grind under his heel the necks of these captives.

All sin inflicts captivity, and no bondage is more cruel and hopeless than the slavery of sin.

Only truth is freedom, and "if therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

3. Jehovah Contends with His People

A controversy now ensues between Jehovah and his people. The prophet is bidden to speak before the mountains and the hills and he calls: "Hear, O ye mountains, Jehovah's controversy with his people, and ye enduring foundations of the earth; for Jehovah hath a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel." The prophet figuratively or poetically, for these prophets were also poets, appeals to nature as represented in the mountains and the "enduring foundations of the earth" to hear and decide the matter.

The Hebrew thinkers and writers viewed nature as the visible manifestation of God and make sublime appeals to it as witnesses for him.

Were our vision not so dim we would view nature in the same light and this would blend our science and our religion into one grand system of truth.

Jehovah pleads with pathetic insistence, "O my people, what I have done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

God is so sure not only of his own righteousness and fair dealings with us, but also of our sense of right and just judgment that he is willing to submit his case to us.

Jesus more than once submitted his teaching to the judgment of his prejudiced and hostile hearers. His enemies being judges, he was true and right and just and generous.

Jehovah then appealed to his past dealings with his chosen people and reverted again to the oft-told story of his deliverance of them out of Egypt, the ever-present grand background of Jewish history and divine guidance and goodness.

We have this same background immeasurably enlarged and enriched by all subsequent history and providential guidance.

As we look back over the way God has led us as individuals and as a nation only one exclamation can come from our lips: "My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." "He hath not so dealt with any nation."

4. The People's Answer

The people reply to this appeal of Jehovah with a request to know how they shall please him. "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with a thousand rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

They would pour out rivers of oil and send their own sons into the fire of sacrifice, as they had been doing even as late as the day of Ahaz (II Kings 16:3) and Manasseh (II Kings 21:2), if thereby they could win the divine favor. They thought God might be poor and needed their calves and their oil, or bloodthirsty and delighted in the burning of their sons.

They thought of worship in terms of outward rites and material goods. And this disposition is deeply ingrained in human nature.

This is the root of extreme ritualism in religion. God is a person after our own nature and delights in riches and splendid pageantry and pomp.

How far is this removed from the spiritual nature and needs of God?

Jesus swept all such ideas and forms of worship off the map when he declared, "The hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers."

Jehovah often revolted against these Jewish sacrifices and altars streaming with blood.

"I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors" (Lev. 26:31). "I despise your feasts. . . neither will I regard the peace-offering of your fat beasts" (Amos 5:21).

He ordered these taken from him for they nauseated him. But "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

5. Jehovah's Requirement

Jehovah now speaks in lofty and memorable words: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Who will gild that gold or throw a perfume on that bit of literature? It is one of the most beautiful things in the Bible or in all the literature of the world.

It is remarkable to find it in the Old Testament that is so ritualistic and materialistic in its forms and ordinances of religion; and yet it is not without many parallels, as in Deut. 10:12 and the Psalms (51:17) and elsewhere and it comes to its full flower and perfect blossom in the New Testament, as in John 4:21-24 and notably in James 1:27.

Nevertheless this is the finest statement of the spirit of true religion anywhere and long has it attracted and held the admiration of the world.

It cuts through all external forms and especially through all the shows and shams of religion and lays bare its true soul and spirit. And how simple and beautiful it is; how it sweeps away all the metaphysics of doctrine and creed and theology and gives us the pure life and spirit of worship and religion.

It is still true that creed and ritual have their proper place in worship, but they are only means and not the end, the outer form and not the inner spirit.

If we have the spirit we have the essence.

It is all summed up in the mind of Christ. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "But if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the life and times of Micah.
2. May we find ourselves devising iniquity?
3. In what sense does God devise all things that come to pass?
4. Give other Scripture teaching on the nature of true religion.
5. How can we properly balance and blend the outer form and ritual of religion and its inner spirit?
6. What is the matter with "wicked balances?"

LESSON IX—NOVEMBER 27

Isaiah Teaches True Worship

Lesson: Isaiah 1:10-20

Golden Text: Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart. PSALM 24:3–4.

Devotional Reading: John 4:21-24.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Worship that Pleases God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Nature of True Worship.

Lesson Text: Isaiah 1:10-20

10 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

11 What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Hearing Jehovah.***
2. ***Wearying God.***
3. ***Putting Away Sin.***
4. ***Reasoning Together with God.***
5. ***Inward Cleansing and Outward Reward.***

The kingdoms of Judah and of Israel for a time rose in prosperity and power, and then sunk in luxury and wickedness.

Worldly success and wealth begot idleness, luxury, vice, pride, injustice, cruelty, until the social fabric had deteriorated and rotted, and the state was tottering to its fall.

Thus weakened and exposed, enemies swept down upon them from the north "like a wolf on the fold," and first Israel rolled in the dust under the tramp of the terrible Assyrian hosts (722 B.C.), and then Judah fell under the Babylonians thundering at her gates and breaking down her walls (586 B.C.), and both were carried off into captivity. Isaiah lived and prophesied in Jerusalem during its decline. This first chapter is a vivid illustration of the prophet's method and spirit in dealing with degenerate people.

"No Hebrew prophet has a style more majestic than that of Isaiah. The loftiness of his thought and feeling finds a fit expression in his lofty eloquence. In the noble splendor of his verse he is surpassed by no poet of his race."

1. Hearing Jehovah

The prophet opens his message with an appeal to Judah to hear Jehovah (2) and in our passage continues his appeal, addressing the men of Jerusalem as "ye rulers of Sodom" and "ye people of Gomorrah" because of their wickedness and calling upon them, "Hear the word of Jehovah" and "give ear unto the law of our God."

This message runs through the whole Bible.

Hearing instruction is a large part of our life. It begins in the earliest childhood in the home and runs on into the school and then out into all life.

Whatever our field and work we must hear those that have expert knowledge and skill.

Life itself may depend on the way we hear a physician at our bedside, or on the way an engineer hears the orders of the train dispatcher, or on the way a soldier hears the command of his general. To disregard superior instruction is a mark of folly and may designate a fool.

The higher we rise in life the more are we dependent on instruction, and this principle carries us up to God himself.

In him is all the fullness of wisdom and he speaks with authority infinitely surpassing that of any human scholar or leader. When God speaks the prophet may well exclaim, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth."

But how can we know when God speaks?

Many are the voices by which he speaks to us. The grand picture language of the natural world, starry sky and forest, vine and flower; in the words of holy prophets who spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost; through our own reason and conscience; and supremely through him that cometh from above, who is "the truth, the way and the life": these are all his voices.

We are to try all these spirits and see that they are of God and then we may know that we hear God.

Our difficulty, however, is seldom that we do not know the will of God but that we refuse or are reluctant to obey it. The men of Judah knew enough, but they hardened their hearts against their light.

Obedience itself is a sure way of knowing spiritual truth. "If any man willeth to do my will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God."

2. *Wearying God*

Jehovah makes a long complaint accompanied with a bill of particulars against Judah.

They offered a multitude of sacrifices, but Jehovah was nauseated with the smell of their burnt meat and sickened with their altars streaming with blood.

When they come before him, trampling his courts, their incense is an abomination, and their new moons and sabbaths and feasts weary

him. When they spread forth before him their hands full of blood he will hide his eyes from the offensive sight.

The very worship of these people wearied God.

Perhaps they carried it to fanatical excess in their frenzied fear of impending judgment and their unreasoning hope of placating their God. Here is another Hebrew prophet and the greatest of them representing God as revolting against ritualistic worship and denouncing it as a weariness and gross offence to him.

Again we are warned that the outward show of religion, especially when it becomes a hollow sham, can never take the place of the inward spirit.

This process had reached its limit in the days of Jesus himself when the religion of the Pharisees was outwardly like a whited sepulchre but inwardly was full of dead men's bones.

We may build stately churches and adorn them with all our art and fill them with an elaborate and spectacular service with vested choirs, and splendid music may roll through the arches and a fashionable assembly may throng the edifice, and yet it may all be a show and mockery and offence in the sight of God.

The prophets, however, are not denouncing sacrifice and ceremony in their proper degree and purpose, but only the abuse of these rites when the outer form smothers and crowds out the inner spirit.

Religion, the highest and best thing in our human world, may be degraded into the lowest and worst.

"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The men of Judah were not the first or the last people that were guilty of this perversity. Let us beware that we do not verily weary God with our hypocritical worship.

3. Putting Away Sin

Judah was thus religious overmuch in all the outer forms of worship amidst the prevailing wickedness.

Turning in disgust from its temple reeking with blood Jehovah calls upon Judah to mend its ways. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

This is the right program and process of repentance and reform.

It begins in the heart with washing it clean. The fountain must be made clean and sweet before its streams can flow pure, and out of the heart are all the issues of life.

This is where the religion of the Bible always begins.

"Truth in the inward parts" is the demand of the Old Testament, and "Ye must be born anew" is the necessity of the New.

Only the Holy Spirit can wash us and make us clean within.

From this pure fountain are to flow many streams of practical holiness. Evil is to cease and good is to begin, justice is to be rendered, the oppressed are to be relieved, care is to be given to the fatherless and the widow. Social righteousness is to pervade the whole fabric of the city and country.

Thus while repentance starts in the heart it does not stop until it has flowed out and touched every part and fiber of life with new truth and beauty.

4. Reasoning Together with God

The prophet, speaking in the name of Jehovah, next appeals to reason. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah."

This is one of the great sayings of the Bible, a mountain peak in the range of revelation.

God appeals to reason in man.

He does not treat him as a dull brute or as a slave with no rights that he is bound to respect. Having endowed him with mental faculties he does not now stifle and stultify them by allowing them no room in which to work and giving them nothing to do.

On the contrary, he gives our reason the largest scope and liberty.

Reason is the only avenue along which God can approach us and enter into relations with us.

He has made us so that we can rightly believe and accept anything only as it approves itself to our reason. God comes down upon this common ground of reason and seeks to win our faith and obedience.

He does not simply sit upon his throne of sovereignty and command us despotically in an arbitrary way to submit, but he gives reasons for his course and commandments.

All of God's ways are reasonable when they are properly understood.

The whole universe is woven of intellectual tissues and is reasonable throughout. "I have profound faith," said Huxley, "in the rationality of the universe."

Religion, so far from being blind belief and superstition is reasonable through and through.

God calls upon us to reason together with him—wonderful condescension and a most reasonable proposal.

All he asks is that we reason the matter out with him. If we do not reason with him, we are rebelling against him.

5. *Inward Cleansing and Outward Reward*

What was to be the result of such reasoning?

Inward cleansing and outward reward.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as wool."

A most beautiful conclusion to the divine reasoning.

God does not reason with us simply to drive us into a corner and convict us of hopeless guilt, but he reasons with us to get us out of a hard place into purity and liberty.

Scarlet sin turned to snowy whiteness, crimson guilt made as the purest wool—how merciful and kind is God's reasoning with us.

Here is divine chemistry that no subtlety of human discovery or invention can ever imitate.

Here is a process of moral regeneration that no human psychology can ever reproduce. God only can wash sin white and turn guilt to purity, and if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Such inward purity is sure to show itself in outward prosperity.

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Good people and the good of the land are closely linked together. Human virtue goes down into the soil and comes up in richer harvests and fuller barns.

Fields fertilized with character and conscience are the most productive.

If we are willing and obedient in keeping God's commandments he will see that we lack no good thing; but if we refuse and rebel we shall be devoured; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the life and times of Isaiah.
2. How do we know when God hears us?
3. Can we really weary and worry God?
4. What is it to reason and what is the place of reason in religion?
5. In what way can good character enrich the land?

LESSON X—DECEMBER 4

Isaiah Teaches Right Living

Lesson: Isaiah 5:1-12

Golden Text: Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. James 1:27.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:6-13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Life that Pleases God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Elements of Right Living.

Lesson Text: Isaiah 5:1-12

Let me sing for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

2 And he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

6 And I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry.

8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land!

9 In mine ears *saith* Jehovah of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.

10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield *but* an ephah.

11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them!

12 And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are *in* their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Parable.

2. Judgment.

3. The Growth of Great Landed Estates.
4. A World-old Vice.
5. Its Allurements.

Two questions as old as civilization were troubling Judah in the days of Isaiah—the land question and the liquor question.

The small estates were bought up and added to great estates, so that instead of many small freeholders there were a few great landlords with many dependents.

Wealth was getting into the hands of a few and was being used as a means of injustice and oppression.

Against this evil the prophet dared to lift his voice in judgment.

Intertwined with the land evil was the liquor evil.

The extremes of wealth and want both relax self-control and promote intemperance. Poverty often drives to drink, and luxury and liquor are closely related.

Against this evil, also, the prophet utters a warning and paints a picture of its terrible features.

1. A Parable

The prophet first gains the attention of the people by reciting a parable in the form of a song which tells the story of a vineyard owned by a friend.

We give this song as arranged in Moulton's Modern Reader's Bible:

My wellbeloved had a vineyard
In a very fruitful hill:
And he made a trench about it,
And gathered out the stones thereof,
And planted it with the choicest vine,
And built a tower in the midst of it,
And also hewed out a winepress therein:
And he looked that it should bring forth grapes—
And it brought forth wild grapes.

The prophet then applies this parable directly to Judah in general and to the men of Jerusalem in particular.

God had chosen them as his vineyard, planting them in a fruitful land, surrounding them with safeguards, sending them prophets and bestowing upon them the choicest care and favor.

Yet they had proved unfaithful, and in response to his just expectation of and demand for fruit had returned him only wild grapes, small and sour.

The picture is not only applicable to ancient Judah, but also to our own country and to us as individuals.

We are certainly the chosen and favored people of the modern world, in location, fertility of soil, immense material resources, and all the elements of national greatness far surpassing any other people of our day.

Yet we cannot claim that we have made commensurate and worthy return to the God of nations for our manifold blessings, and an indictment of unfaithfulness and failure might be drawn up against us as severe in its way as that against Judah.

2. *Judgment*

The prophet now grows bold and pronounces judgment against his people. What will the owner of such a vineyard do to it?

He will break down its hedges and walls and let it lie waste and be overrun with weeds and briers. So will Jehovah of hosts deal with his unfaithful people, though they were his chosen ones.

He justly looked for judgment and righteousness and saw only oppression and heard cried of distress.

As it is translated in the New Century Bible: "And I hoped for good rule, and behold! blood-rule, and for law-keeping, and behold! law-breaking."

Especially was judgment pronounced upon the land-grabbers.

"Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land!"

These predictions of judgment were fulfilled in the disasters that came upon Judah.

Its internal affairs fell into disorder and anarchy, and foreign enemies came up against it and found it an easy prey. The Assyrians and then the Babylonians swept over it as a besom of destruction, took it captive and left it desolate.

Often has this story been repeated on the pages of history.

God deals with all nations on the same principles, and any nation that is unfaithful to its possessions and privileges and yields the fruits of unrighteousness and oppression will reap a harvest of downfall and retribution.

Assyria itself conquered Israel only to fall under the same condemnation on a vaster scale. Persia followed in the same track, to be succeeded in turn by Greece and then Rome and many a modern nation.

We are not to think ourselves secure against the same fate.

We may pride ourselves on our enormous resources and strength and ridicule the idea that decline and ruin are possible to us, and yet our very greatness may only hurry us into a fall from righteousness into injustice and fill our land with the cries of the wronged.

God is the God of nations and will call every nation to account for its deeds.

3. The Growth of Great Landed Estates

The growth of great landed estates was a threatening evil in Judah. Rich families were joining house to house and field to field and crowding the poor off the earth.

This was creating a spirit of social unrest and rebellion and laying a mine that would explode in a great social revolution or outburst of anarchy.

The end of such a social condition would be ruin to both rich and poor, great and small, and many a fair palace would be laid low in ashes.

Monopoly of land or of any of the material resources of society is a great danger and has been a chief factor in the breakdown of fallen empires.

It has been a living trouble in Ireland in our day, and England is now grappling with this problem and trying to find a way of breaking up the great estates and distributing them among the people.

Hitherto we have had such abundance of land and mineral resources that this question has scarcely arisen on our horizon to cast any shadow upon our prosperity and peace, but now it is beginning to form clouds whose mutterings are already heard.

It is a difficult political and economic and moral problem to solve or to regulate and calls for justice and wisdom and brotherhood among all classes.

4. A World-old Vice

From the land evil the prophet suddenly turns to the liquor evil and paints a vivid picture of this world-old vice.

It is throughout a picture of woe.

The first effects of wine are flushed features that seem to be the glow of health. But nowhere are first appearances so false as in the case of wine.

The true picture is not seen until the first rosy flush has passed off and permanent effects are seen: then every feature is a line of woe.

The prophet is describing those that are far gone in drink. They rise up early in the morning for it; their appetite is not an occasional or intermittent impulse, but it has grown into a steady craving that burns constantly and never ceases its cry. It wakes as they wake from sleep and they steal with unsteady steps through the grey morning to the place of drink.

Ordinary beverages will no longer satisfy their fiery thirst, and now they must have strong drink.

Wine and beer lose their pungency and they must have something that bites with sharper fangs. Diluted poison is not deadly enough and they mix their cups with distilled lightning and hell-fire.

Having started in early, they continue late; as the darkness hides them from public view they lose their sense of shame and their revelling runs into rioting and ends in debauchery.

All this they do that wine may inflame them; and this it does in a more literal sense than they intend or may know, for it literally burns them up.

It spreads its subtle fire through all their tissues and burns up blood and bone and brain.

Its fire also goes much deeper and consumes intellect and conscience and burns the purity and strength and beauty of manhood into ashes. However full of life and promise the drinker may be in the beginning, in the end he is only a burnt-out cinder.

This is the fatal woe that is in the intoxicating cup.

Though it seems brimming over and sparkling with rosy foam and pleasure, yet at last it biteth like an adder, and the only safeguard against it is to touch it not.

5. *Its Allurements*

All attractions are used to enhance the fascination of the wine cup. Violin and harp, flute and drum, all the arts of music weave around it the witchery of chords and songs, and around it revolve the whirling mazes of the dance.

The saloon is often a gilded palace, gorgeously furnished and decorated, blazing with colored lights, agleam with polished silver and cut glass, and sometimes enriched with costly works of art. Strains of music come floating out through its doors to attract and tempt. The music that stirs the pulse kindles the desire for drink and becomes a subtle and powerful ally of appetite.

The saloon thus makes itself a comfortable and attractive place and appeals to all the senses to lure its victims.

Society puts the wine glass on its table and surrounds it with social enticements.

All arts and appeals, music, society, friendship, the most beautiful things in the world, are turned into procuresses of vice.

The devil wreathes the wine cup in roses that may conceal its deadly fangs.

But while the votaries of wine are charmed by these glittering enticements, there are deeper things which they do not consider: "they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands."

The judgments of God are written all over these allurements.

Around the intoxicating cup lie its slain victims by scores and thousands, as scorched and burned insects lie in heaps under the electric light on a summer evening.

The deadly nature of the intoxicating glass is as plainly advertised as though it were marked with a skull and cross bones. Its red contents are dyed with blood, its fiery color is the gleam of the bottomless pit.

God has branded it with his curse, but they have not "considered the operation of his hands."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How old is the drink evil?
2. Why has it taken so long to control and eradicate it?
3. Is the prohibition law on the whole showing good results?
4. Have men a right to agitate for its annulment or modification?
5. Does the private ownership of land under public control work better than would any other system?

LESSON XI—DECEMBER 11

Isaiah Counsels Rulers

Lesson: Isaiah 37:5-11, 14-20

Golden Text: Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. ISAIAH 26:3.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 21:1-7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Ruler of Nations.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Recognition of God in National Affairs.

Lesson Text: Isaiah 37:5-11, 14-20

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come out to fight against thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?

14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah.

15 And Hezekiah prayed unto Jehovah, saying,

16 O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest *above* the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

17 Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God.

18 Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries, and their land,

19 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them.

20 Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even thou only.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Isaiah's Message to King Hezekiah.*
2. *Reply of the King of Assyria to the King of Judah.*
3. *Hezekiah Goes into the Temple.*
4. *Hezekiah's Prayer.*
5. *A Marvelous Deliverance.*

Successive waves of the vast Assyrian sea of conquering power and pitiless cruelty that stretched far eastward were now breaking over the rocky ridges of Judea.

Samaria had already been submerged, and the advancing angry waves were now surging up around Jerusalem.

Those iron-faced, stony-hearted warriors came year after year in hosts and swarms, their steel-tipped ranks all aglitter with polished metal and blazing with banners.

The watchers at Jerusalem could see their advance marked by the smoke of burning towns and cities.

King Hezekiah rifled the temple of its treasures and stripped the gold off its doors and pillars in order that he might send them three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold and thus try to buy them off.

But nothing could appease their insatiable spirit.

At length they pitched their tents and lighted their camp fires around the capital city and demanded its surrender.

The parleyings between the general of the Assyrians and the chiefs of Jerusalem are intensely dramatic (Chapter 36). The Assyrian general persisted in addressing the Jews on the wall loudly in their own language so that all might hear and through them he sent terrible threats to Hezekiah.

Let him not think that he would escape the fate of the neighboring nations whose gods had fallen under the Assyrian wrath.

The Jewish chiefs heard these threats in silence, for their faith was failing and their hearts sank within them at such ominous words.

1. Isaiah's Message to King Hezekiah

When these threats were reported to Hezekiah he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth in his despair and went into the house of Jehovah.

He then sent his ministers, elders and priests, covered with sackcloth to Isaiah the prophet, beseeching him to lift up his voice in prayer to Jehovah. Our lesson opens with the message that the prophet sent to his king.

It breathes a lofty spirit of faith and courage.

In times of peril and impending disaster when human power has reached its extremity and all seems lost, some one is needed with faith and courage to face and master the situation, and who shall he be but the prophet of the Lord and minister of God?

He speaks in the name of Jehovah, "Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."

How grandly does the monotheistic God of Isaiah rise above all the kings and gods of the heathen nations?

How assuredly does he declare that he will control the Assyrian king, putting a hook in his nose and leading him as a captive of a greater power than he knows, spreading rumors around him that cause his return by invisible agencies and at last causing him to perish by his own sword?

All this was literally fulfilled in due time.

The king's faith had failed him at this critical hour, but the prophet's faith held true and firm as an anchor that has gripped the rock holds a ship in a storm.

Faith in the sovereign God must be the bedrock of our confidence and courage in every hour, especially when temptation and trials and disasters roll over us in submerging billows.

2. *Reply of the King of Assyria to the King of Judah*

Rabshakeh, the Assyrian general in command of the army before Jerusalem, sent a report of Hezekiah's attitude to Sennacherib, the Assyrian king who was carrying on a campaign against an approaching Egyptian army, and he sent a reply to the king of Judah warning him against trusting in his own God and reminding him of the fate that had befallen all other lands that had stood in the way of Assyria.

"Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done unto all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?"

We can little imagine how this message would strike terror into Hezekiah's heart.

He had watched the approach of the terrible Assyrian hosts, he knew how true it was that other nations had been trampled down under their feet, and what could save him? Would not Jehovah his God go the way of all these pagan gods?

This thought has not altogether vanished from our minds. Does not our faith in God encounter the same doubts and trials?

There are not wanting voices in our day that are telling us that our God is a mere subjective idea and myth that has grown up out of the fears and superstitions of men through the ages.

Can intelligent people educated in our modern science and psychology and philosophy, acquainted with history and archeology, with primitive man and his fears and fictitious demons and deities, in the midst of all our modern culture and art, believe in a personal and ever-present God?

Are we not also being deceived? Will not our God fail to deliver us even as heathen gods failed to deliver their votaries?

Such doubts are in the air and receive aid and comfort in high quarters.

We must face them and find honest answers to them.

We do this in the very constitution of our human nature which has an intuitive and instinctive need for and belief in God as a practical necessity in our life; and we find God in nature and history and experience and supremely in Christ as certainly as we find food and drink to match and satisfy our hunger and thirst.

Let us not be easily moved in our minds as though God were being crowded out of our life and driven out of the universe, for our faith stands confirmed by all the ages of faith and by our own hearts.

Even science itself is removing the ground of many of these doubts and uncovering before our eyes a spiritual universe that is the friendly home of our faith and of our God.

3. Hezekiah Goes into the Temple

When Hezekiah received this message he "went up unto the house of Jehovah and spread it before Jehovah."

He simply laid it before God as the evidence of his tragic situation and as a silent appeal to him for some help and guidance.

Kings and presidents often thus come to the end of their extremity and then God is their only refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Is not this often our personal experience?

When driven into some corner in which we are shut in on every side and realize our utter impotence and dependence, do not our hearts then instinctively cry out unto God as our only refuge and strength?

God uses the mountains on the one side and the Red Sea on the other to teach us our need of him and to draw out faith in him as our Father.

Blessed are trial and pain, loss and sorrow when they teach us to put our trust, not in the things that are seen, but in the things that are not seen.

The fundamental fact in any nation's life and power is its God.

Does it believe and obey the true God, or is it pervaded and controlled by some false ideal of military honor or material splendor?

On this question the final destiny of a nation depends. And all history bears witness that a nation that simply builds its greatness on its material resources is building on sand and great will be its fall.

Our nation in its great crises has ever gone into its churches and poured out its heart before God in prayer, and he has heard its cry and proved himself our refuge and present help.

4. Hezekiah's Prayer

Hezekiah having laid the letter before Jehovah as a mute appeal that told its own story now poured out his soul in a wonderful prayer.

Again he exalts Jehovah as the supreme sovereign God: "thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth."

It took the world a long time to climb out of the mists of polytheism into the clear light of one true God, maker of heaven and earth, and even the Hebrews did not attain this vision at one step but struggled up to it through generations.

Hezekiah stands on this summit and pleads with God as friend with Friend. He appeals to Jehovah to incline his ear and "hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God."

It is a cry for justice against those who lift themselves up against God and trample upon his people.

This feeling at times surges up in our hearts as we see proud and cruel men using their might to defy high heaven and oppress the weak.

A strong sense of justice grows hot against such oppression and gathers strength for the day of judgment.

Hezekiah points Jehovah, pleading with him as with a human father, to all the countries laid waste by the Assyrian in his devastating march, casting their gods into the fire.

He sees this same destruction bearing down upon his own country and cried out, "Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even thou only."

We can foresee what the enemies of God and of righteousness will do to us by the ruin they have wrought in other ages and lands.

If we value aright our Christian faith and institutions we will guard them against forces that would undermine and destroy them.

Hezekiah urged the honor of Jehovah as the ground of his prayer, "that all the earth may know that thou art Jehovah," and we seek the highest good for ourselves and for the world when we hallow his name and pray that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

5. A Marvelous Deliverance

We need to take a glance beyond our lesson to see how the promise Jehovah gave through Isaiah to Hezekiah was swiftly fulfilled.

The Assyrians stationed their sentinels and covered their camp fires and lay down to sleep with the same proud security that they ever had.

But one precaution they forgot to place: they neglected to station sentinels in the air and throw out a picket line against invisible spirits of destruction.

They supposed they were contending with man only and forgot God.

"And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies."

Jewish tradition says that a plague swept over them like fire and left them dead. Herodotus the Greek historian has a story that Sennacherib's army was destroyed by a pestilence owing to the prayers of a pious king in Egypt.

Whatever the natural agency, it was the act and breath of God.

Twenty years later, in 681 B.C., Sennacherib himself was murdered by his sons.

So came to an end this attempt of the proud Assyrian to conquer Judah, though later the Babylonians accomplished this object.

God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform and all the visible and invisible forces of nature are in his hand to do his will and distribute reward or retribution among men.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the Life and times of Hezekiah.
2. Give some account of the life of Sennacherib.
3. How can we give God his rightful place in our national life?
4. Give some notable historical instances of divine deliverance.
5. Give instances of divine national judgment.

LESSON XII—DECEMBER 18

Review: Early Kings and Prophets of Israel

From Samuel to Isaiah

(Second Half of a Six-Months' Course)

Golden Text: God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son. HEBREWS 1:1–2.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 67.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Lessons from the Early Prophets.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Mission of the Prophets.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. Elijah.
2. Amos.
3. Hosea.
4. Micah.
5. Isaiah.

The Fourth Quarter extends from Elijah, of the northern kingdom, to Isaiah, of the southern kingdom, covering most of the time from the division of the monarchy to the fall of both of them into captivity.

The prophets stand out in this period as the striking figures overtopping the weak and often wicked kings and thundering the judgments of Jehovah to unfaithful people.

1. Elijah

Elijah was a prophet of fire and blood, stern of countenance, fiery in zeal, but subject to extreme reaction in which he fell into deep despondency.

Called out of his retirement at the close of a famine to execute judgment upon the false faith of Baal and restore the true worship

of Jehovah, he met the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel where the grand trial took place.

The false prophets first tried their incantations with no response from their God. Then Elijah prepared the altar so as to preclude all deception and at his petition fire leaped from heaven and burned his sacrifice and the demonstration was complete and final with the people.

The false prophets were then put to death, a mode of dealing with heresy that has happily passed from our day.

Yet we must always judge things according to their time, and the immoral worship of Baal was eating like a cancer into the religious and moral life of Israel.

In the next scene we see a panic-stricken prophet fleeing from the presence of Jezebel, and we find Elijah lying in despondency far south at Mount Horeb.

He thought that all was lost and that he was the only good man left, but he received a revelation through a grand display of the forces of nature.

Wind and earthquake and fire blew and shook and blazed around him, but God was not in these, and then a still small voice spoke to him in the tender accents of the Spirit.

He was sent back to his work with the disclosure that there were thousands of true followers of God in Israel of whom he had no knowledge, so much wider was his influence than he knew.

Work cured him of his despondency and it is generally a good antidote to our discouragement.

The next scene in Elijah's life finds him in Ahab's vineyard fearlessly facing that wicked king. Ahab coveted a bit of ground lying under his palace window, but it belonged to a peasant who was unwilling to sell it.

Jezebel found out the situation and took it in hand with decisive measures.

She sent Naboth to his death and then triumphantly bade Ahab to take the vineyard. Ahab went down into the vineyard with a high

degree of elation over the success of the venture, when there he met the terrible Elijah and heard his dreadful doom.

Judgment often seems to us to delay and drag its heavy steps, but it arrives on its own schedule and in the end the books balance.

2. Amos

At this point we are given some insight into the ways in which prophets were called.

They were men of different types and temperaments and were called in appropriate ways.

Elijah, after his return from Horeb, found Elisha plowing with oxen, and he called him from his plow. Amos was a farmer and also received his call in the fields. Isaiah was city-bred and received his call in a splendid vision in the temple.

And so whatever may be one's place and occupation he may be called into the ministry, and if not into the ministry of preaching then into the ministry of serving God in whatever field he may be.

Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, had a special call that matched his splendid powers of imagination, and there is something special and appropriate in every one's call to service.

Amos belonged to the southern kingdom of Judah but migrated into Israel and there preached. He was a farmer and man of plain speech and was fearless in his exposure and denunciation of the sins of his day, especially the sins of the rich.

While up in Israel he cast a swift glance of judgment back upon his own Judah and then he scorched Israel with his fiery tongue.

Official corruption and social injustice were running to the extreme limit of rottenness and oppression.

Amos was not ignorant of history and turned its fierce searchlight upon Israel with telling effect.

The fate of the Amorites was held up as a mirror to show what was coming. Israel was without excuse because prophets had been raised

up to teach and warn them, but they had corrupted these very prophets and found ways of shutting their mouths.

The picture Amos gives of the social conditions of his day is a warning to us today and a powerful temperance lesson.

He pleads for justice and urges the people to seek good. He tells them that God despises their religious feasts and assemblies because they are all a show and a sham and their very music is a jangling discord in his ears.

In contrast with this sad degeneracy God would have justice roll down as waters and righteousness flow as a river through all the social order.

3. Hosea

Hosea was another prophet who carried on his ministry in the northern kingdom in the days of Jeroboam II when the kingdom had passed the zenith of its glory and was beginning to fade into the twilight of its fall and the night of its captivity.

He was a man of personal sorrow which was turned into a means of grace.

Jehovah through Hosea appealed to Israel as a child whom he loved, and this is ever the deepest ground of God's love for us and care over us.

Israel, however, was a wayward child as we all are and yet God loves us still.

God in his goodness has set his love upon us and showered blessings around us, but our very abundance is a danger as it may lead to pride and luxury and vice.

The very fact that God has dealt so bounteously with our country may be our peril.

Jehovah drew Israel "with cords of a man, with the bands of love," easing the yoke on their neck and providing them with food.

The figure is that of an owner who does not drive his oxen with a hard whip and work them to death, but deals with them gently and provides for them generously.

> A mystic fellowship sometimes binds a man to his horse or dog, and this is an intimation of the fine relation that unites God and man.

Yet again Israel proved rebellious and obdurate. But Jehovah persisted in his gracious promise that he would heal their backsliding and love them freely.

The prophet grows poetic as he describes the Lord descending as dew upon Israel, a beautiful figure for the gentle freshness and cooling balm of divine grace upon a sin-sick soul. Under this dew the beauty of Israel shall be as the olive-tree.

> All nature is made a preacher of God's grace as it flowers out into the beauty of holiness.

Hosea closes his book with an appeal to the wise.

> What is wisdom but the power to penetrate into the spiritual laws of the world and rise into the life of the spirit?
>
> We are apt to measure wisdom in terms of science and philosophy or of culture and art or of material might, but these are superficial and light as chaff or foam compared with the wisdom that hides our life with Christ in God.

4. Micah

Micah was another minor prophet who lived in the rural region around Jerusalem and shot flashes and blazes of light and judgment up into that metropolis and seat of wealth and splendor.

> He pronounces woe upon the fat, sleek, corrupt citizens that work evil upon their beds, with calm and cool deliberation concocting their evil schemes.

Such ideas will surely run into action and "when the morning is light they practice it."

If we think evil we are sure to do evil, and evil that is first thought through is loaded with double guilt. One of the most fatal stages of sin and guilt is when one grows "wise to do evil."

But while man is devising evil God is also devising judgment, making "the punishment fit the crime." It should be so, or all law would be meaningless and the universe would not be respectable.

But the universe is an orthodox institution, and retribution along with reward is woven into its whole web and texture.

Jehovah "hath a controversy with his people," for the prophet represents God as condescending to our level and carrying on his affairs with us after our human manner, and he is willing to submit his case to our judgment.

The people answer with an appeal for knowledge as to how they shall come before him.

The answer of Jehovah is the sublime passage which is one of the glories of the Bible and of all literature.

This makes religion one of the simplest as it is the most beautiful thing in the world, and we reach its ideal when we have in us the same mind that was also in Christ.

5. *Isaiah*

The last three lessons in the Quarter are from Isaiah, the greatest of the poet prophets of the Old Testament whose imagination flames through his pages like a splendid conflagration.

He lived and prophesied in Jerusalem and saw its glories growing dim to darkness amidst increasing unfaithfulness and corruption inviting and insuring the final fall.

He calls upon his hearers to hear Jehovah, surely the highest duty of man, and then voices the complaint of Jehovah that he is wearied with their very religion.

The worst thing in the world is religion when its light turns to darkness.

But Jehovah, speaking through the prophet, calls upon the people to "reason together" with him, a wonderful condescension on his part which shows how reasonable he is and how willing to take us into his counsel and trust us to agree with him in the end.

Inward cleansing is the cure for outward sins though they be as scarlet, and there now flows for us a fountain that can work this cure.

Isaiah not only dwells on the heights of theology, but also comes down upon the plain of daily living.

He deals with the prevailing evils of his day, especially the growth of great landed estates that crowded the poor off into narrow quarters, one of the oldest evils of history and still troubling our modern world.

He then attacks the drink habit, another old evil, and shows that the rosy cup burns blood and brain and soul to ashes.

Though it is surrounded with all the allurements of music and art, yet it is one of the deadliest things in the world, and if we are wise we will heed this teaching and not annul or relax our Eighteenth Amendment and prohibition law. Isaiah counsels rulers because they are subject to God and the minister is often wiser than the statesmen and speaks from a higher point of view.

Hezekiah went up into the temple in a national crisis and laid the case before God, and God answered with a swift and marvelous deliverance.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was the office of a prophet?
2. Give a brief outline of the life and main teaching of each of the five prophets included in this Quarter.
3. Are there any prophets today?

LESSON XIII—DECEMBER 25

Christmas Lesson

Lesson: Luke 2:8-20

Golden Text: Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. MATTHEW 1:21.

Devotional Reading: Luke 2:8-20.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Prince of Peace.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Promised Era of Peace.

Lesson Text: Luke 2:8-20

8 And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.
9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
10 And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people:
11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.
12 And this *is* the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.
13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
14 Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men
in whom he is well pleased.
15 And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
16 And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.
17 And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child.
18 And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds.
19 But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.
20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Angels and Shepherds.*
2. *Good Tidings of Great Joy.*
3. *The Swaddling Clothes.*
4. *The Heavenly Chorus.*
5. *Away to Bethlehem.*
6. *The Wondrous Babe.*

Again the Christmas bells ring out around the world and the gladdest day of the year dawns. The wonderful story never loses its charm and in our own country and in strange lands, down under burning tropics and far up along frozen shores of the north it tells its message of gladness and floods the world with joy.

Our age is eager for news, the cry of the newsboy is ever in the air, we snatch the latest papers damp from the press, but the greatest and most interesting news in the world today is the old yet ever new story that was first told to shepherds at Bethlehem.

1. Angels and Shepherds

Earth was unconscious of this divine birth, but heaven knew it. There was holy ecstasy in all the shining ranks above, and angels came, as birds in the spring, in songful mood to scatter the music of the good news over the earth.

The Christ-child was born, and now the problem was how to get the news into the world.

Where shall angels begin, what human ears shall first hear the wondrous tidings? Let them go to Jerusalem, we would have said, and call upon the High Priest and first take him into their confidence, and then let them go to the Temple and stand amidst the splendors of that holy sanctuary and proclaim to the assembled priests and scribes that prophecy was fulfilled and their long-expected Messiah had come.

Shall not some respect be paid to official places and dignitaries? Has not God ordained priests and presbyters through whom he dispenses his grace and administers his kingdom?

Yet history witnesses that at times few men stand in God's way more than ecclesiastics.

They are rarely the men that hear a new message: God must usually tell it to somebody else first.

One of the most startling things in the Bible is the fact that the announcement of Christ's birth was made, not to priests, but to shepherds.

The gospel was first preached, not in a church, but in a sheep pasture where there were more sheep than men to hear.

What a rebuke and warning is this to our ministerial pretensions and pride! God can easily dispense with us and may pass us by and speak to some humbler soul.

The great people up in the temple have no monopoly of his grace and it may break out in the most unexpected quarters.

The gospel is no respecter of places and persons.

It may be preached in a costly church or a stately cathedral, but it is also at home in a country school house or an extemporized wooden tabernacle or in a sheep pasture.

In simplicity and catholicity it is adapted to all classes and conditions of life.

It has the same message for priest and people, prince and peasant, scholar and shepherd, and all may receive from it equal welcome and blessing.

2. Good Tidings of Great Joy

On the night of the nativity these shepherds were in the field keeping watch over their flocks, for those engaged in the lowliest duties may receive a splendid heavenly visitation.

The sleeping sheep lay like drifted snow on the ridges, and all things around them were wrapped in slumber and silence.

The shepherds had no premonition that the great event for which the ages had grown into readiness was near.

The sky was as calm and the stars burned as serene as on other nights, and yet the heavens were tense with expectation and were about to break into celestial song.

Suddenly a mysterious visitor appeared and an unearthly glory shone around them as though the splendor of heaven were pouring down through the rent sky.

The simple-minded shepherds were sore afraid, as wiser people would have been.

"Be not afraid," was the first word of the angel.

Sin has sown such fear in the world that our heavenly Father himself cannot come near us, even to rescue us, without calling out as he approaches, Be not afraid!

There are many reasons for fear in this world, but the coming of Jesus into it is not one of them.

His only mission is to release us from the bondage of sin and death and fill us with that perfect love that casts out fear.

What can fulfill so great a promise as to free us from fear? What is the "good tidings of great joy" the angels came to announce? "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

Are we a bit disappointed?

Does this announcement fall below our expectations? Were we rather looking for some material blessing, richer harvests and finer houses or some magic machine that would increase the wealth and comfort of the world?

If so, we were looking in the wrong direction and were missing the world's true need.

Sin is the root of all our troubles, economic, social and political, and nothing else can do us so much good as a Saviour who cleanses us from sin.

God made no mistake in his Christmas gift to the world and gave us the greatest possible blessing when he gave us Christ.

3. The Swaddling Clothes

Definite directions were given for finding the newborn Saviour.

In the city of David the shepherds would find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

The angelic message was not simply a song in the air, a halo of heavenly light, a fading vision, but it bound itself down to definite places and circumstances and left something substantial.

Christianity is historical and roots itself down in reality as solid as the rocky ridges of Judea.

It is not a beautiful legend or myth, but it fits itself into the rigid framework of history and gives names and dates and places. It was not done in a corner and is not afraid of facts.

The babe was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

Let us be thankful for these significant swaddling clothes.

Jesus was a true human child and took upon him our form down to his infant garments.

We might have expected that he would have been wrapped in silken empurpled robes and laid upon softest down, but the Saviour of the world did not separate himself from common humanity by any such mark of distinction.

He was closer to the great heart of the world in that manger than he would have been in a golden couch up in a palace.

The Christ is a great wonder in his divine personality, but we can understand his swaddling clothes. Christianity is not all mystery, but it also comes down close around us and embodies itself in many plain facts and duties.

"Ye shall find the babe." The shepherds were not left to wander around in search of the child, but were given clear directions that led straight to his manger.

Christ is not hidden from us, we do not have to grope after him in uncertainty, but we can go immediately to him, and every soul that seeks him shall find him.

4. The Heavenly Chorus

The announcement of the angel was accompanied with a chorus of heavenly voices that broke from the gallery of the sky. A shower of song fell upon the rude shepherds.

Kings and artists never heard such a concert, yet it was rendered in a sheep pasture.

Musical artists are generally particular about whom they will entertain, and a high price is asked for tickets to their concerts, but angels do not demand cultivated hearers and will sing for anybody and in any place, even in a sheep pasture; and no tickets of admission are required and no money is asked.

Heaven's best gifts are open to all without money and without price.

The angels' chorus is a broad interpretation of the meaning of Christ's birth.

It first ascribes glory to God, for all good things come from God and manifest his glory as the light reveals the glory of the sun.

This glory of God then manifests itself in peace and good will among men, even as the glory of the sun reappears in the green verdure and blossoming fields and fruit-laden trees of our earth.

The glory of God and the peace of men are never in antagonism, but are always complementary and harmonious; they are root and fruit, the two parts of the same song and make one music.

They cannot be separated and must go together; if we have the one we shall have the other. In glorifying God we make peace among men, and in making peace among men we glorify God.

5. *Away to Bethlehem*

The song died away in the solemn silence and the shepherds were left alone.

It was a critical moment with them.

Shall they follow the vision, or shall they let it vanish with the last echo of the song and relapse into the old dull routine?

No, they did not let it pass into oblivion, and life was never the same to them again.

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

They translated song into service and presently were climbing the rocky slope of Bethlehem.

They were not simply content to hear of so great a wonder but were bent on seeing it. Had these shepherds not followed up the message their knowledge of the Messiah would have stopped right there.

We hear divine messages enough, but too often we let them fade into the light of the common day and pass into forgetfulness.

The grandest vision that ever swept through our brain or illuminated our sky leaves no vestige of worth unless it is turned into conduct and character.

Every vision must be transmuted into victory or it vanishes like a meteor in the night. Seeing is believing, and this is the simplicity and saving power of the gospel.

6. The Wondrous Babe.

Promise was exactly matched with fulfillment. "Ye shall find the babe," was the promise of the angel, and now the record reads, "and they came with haste and found the babe."

When did God ever lead us by explicit promise or implicit instinct to expect anything and then disappoint us?

He gave us thirst that urges us to seek water, and we find sparkling springs and streams. He gave us hunger for bread, and we find fruitful field and orchard. He gave us a craving for love, and he hath set the solitary in families. He hath set eternity in our hearts that urges us to cry, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Shall all the lower needs be satisfied, and this supreme search and cry of the soul be disappointed and mocked?
"Ye shall find the Babe," is the answer to this promise.

God sends us with all our deep cravings and mysterious longings to that cradle in Bethlehem where they will be exactly matched and fulfilled. He hath seen Christ hath seen the Father.

There is room around him for us all; there is fulness in him to satisfy all our need, and no one seeking him sincerely shall be turned empty away.

The shepherds having seen for themselves immediately began to make known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child. The gospel is expansive and cannot be shut up in the heart.

We no sooner hear it than we must begin to tell it, to get it than we begin to give it.

"All wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart."

There is enough wonder centering in and radiating from this child to engage our interest and our profoundest thought through this life and through the life to come.

We wonder at the spangled midnight sky, sprinkled with the splendor of a million million suns, but all that mass of matter and all those blazing fields of space cannot equal in worth and wonder a single human child, and infinitely less do they compare with the wonder and mystery of this Child.

At once heaven and earth began to revolve around his cradle and the centuries have found in him their center and all Christendom today is emblazoned with his name and is his monument.

More and more will it bow in obedience to him and his name shall yet be above every name and to him every knee shall bend and he shall be Lord of all.

We also should gather in wonder and worship around this Child and crown him as our Lord.

Let us now go unto Bethlehem while the Christmas song is in the air and see this thing which has come to pass, and we shall return glorifying and praising God.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What other angel ministries attended the coming and life of Jesus?
2. Why are we so eager to hear news?
3. How can we determine the relative importance of news?
4. What does the humanity of Jesus do for us?
5. How do the glory of God and the peace of men work together?
6. Is Christ increasingly becoming the Prince of Peace among men?

DATE DUE

BV 1560 .S6 1927

Snowden, James Henry, 1852-

Snowden's Sunday school lessons

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
3 0645 1000 3674 4